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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**TRANSFORMATION IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD: AN
ANALYSIS OF COLOMBIA'S SECURITY
TRANSFORMATION**

by

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September 2004

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COLOMBIA'S SECURITY TRANSFORMATION**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines security force transformation issues germane to developing countries, in their attempt to counter emerging threats of international terrorism, insurgency, WMD proliferation and organized crime. Colombia's recent, apparently successful transformation process serves as the case study. This project concludes that the intelligence-based, rapid deployment force (IBRDF) model implemented has contributed significantly to reducing the threat from illegally armed groups (IAGs).

Three distinct periods -- military status quo and near defeat (pre-1998), adaptation under President Andres Pastrana (1998-to-2002), and true transformation under President Alvaro Uribe (2002-to-present) -- were assessed to answer how transformation occurred and determine the principle engine behind the change. Although U.S. support for civilian leadership and training of officers facilitated the process, transformation was financed almost entirely by the Colombian government.

Overall, research highlights four lessons with broader applicability for other nations: the critical role of civilian leadership; the benefit of existing core competency; the importance of an obedient military leadership that either actively supports the reform or at least acquiesces to it; and the usefulness of foreign assistance in the form of education and training. Corruption and the challenges of police-military cooperation are likely obstacles to the transformation process in developing countries.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The name given to this effort is "transformation," ...[to] think boldly and remake itself thoroughly, changing the way we: Train and equip our forces; Use them for combat, stability operations and otherwise; Position those forces around the world; Work with allies and partners; and Conduct procurement and other business activities.

Douglas J. Feith
Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
December 3, 2003

A. THE NEED FOR CHANGE

The War on Terror is being waged on the soil of the world's weaker nations. Yet most of these governments are woefully unprepared to defend against the growing threat. The purpose of this project is to assess Colombia's efforts to transform their security forces to meet the current threat of terrorism, arms and drug trafficking, and human smuggling operations, in order that these lessons may assist future transformation attempts by other nations.

Despite the emergence of diverse, decentralized threats over the past 15 years, many of the world's militaries remain structurally organized and equipped to wage the Cold War. These legacy forces are proving ill equipped and poorly organized to effectively counter these growing challenges. To date, scholarly attention has focused on efforts by the United States, United Nations, NATO and West European democracies to transform their military forces towards smaller, more agile and responsive forces without sacrificing security. These concepts essentially reflect an intelligence-based, rapidly deployment force-type model, or *IBRDF*. Undeterred, transnational terrorist organizations are increasingly establishing their presence in developing nations due to the limited penetration of the governments into the rural areas. Despite this trend, little is known about the attempts of developing nations to transform their defense forces.

B. TRANSFORMATION IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD – QUESTIONS AND ISSUES

This thesis seeks to increase our knowledge about transformation in the developing world by examining Colombia's recent efforts on this front. Discussion focuses on the appropriateness of the IBRDF model, the anticipated obstacles encountered by developing nations, and the appropriate role for the United States to play in the process.

1. Is the IBRDF Appropriate for Developing Countries?

Developing nations face enemies that are organizationally and technologically more advanced than in the past. These international terrorist and criminal organizations are drawn to nations with weaker governmental institutions to enable them to conduct their business unimpeded. Hence, these nations play a critical role in the War on Terror, as well as combating a host of other illicit activities. Traditional forces and static methods have proven largely ineffective in combating these threats. This thesis explores why the *intelligence-based, rapid deployment force* (IBRDF) transformation is proving to be effective against Colombia's adversaries, yet the process, internal to Colombia, is a continuing struggle with an uncertain outcome.

2. What Obstacles Await a Nation's Transformation Effort?

Contrary to conventional wisdom, transformation's most ardent opponents are human factors such as corruption and resistance to change, more so than resource limitations. In the case of Colombia, transformational change was evident before increased revenues had taken effect, indicating that resources and transformation do not share a cause-effect correlation. Meanwhile the continued reality of opposition represents a threat to the long-term viability of transformation. The way in which corruption and resistance negatively affect IBRDF transformation is examined further in this project.

3. U.S. Policy—What Should It Be?

U.S. aid for Colombia will approach US\$4.4 billion (1997-2005) next year, yet the vast majority of those dollars remain narrowly focused on counterdrug missions rather than the comprehensive war they fight, despite supposed

Expanded Authority.¹ This monograph offers recommended corrections for U.S. policy with regard to Colombia, as well as offering more general suggestions for future allied support to other nations, which might benefit from undertaking a process of transformation to an IBRDF model.

C. TERMINOLOGY

In order to create a common reference point, a five key terms used throughout this thesis warrant description or definition.

1. Developing Nation

A developing nation is broadly defined, in accordance with the United Nations' definition, as simply a nation not yet developed. The UN allows each nation to designate itself as *undeveloped* or *developing*. In general, these countries lack significant industrialization relative to their populations and share a low standard of living. For the purpose of this project however, "developing nation" excludes the *least developed countries* (LDCs), which can in no sense be considered developing.

2. Intelligence-Based, Rapid Deployment Force (IBRDF)

The term IBRDF was chosen for its descriptive characteristics and while the term may seem unfamiliar in today's trendy lexicon environment, the foundational concepts are not. There exists no shortage of variants emphasizing similar capabilities: "Information-Based Force," "Intelligence-Based Warfare," "Integrated Operations, Logistics, Intelligence," "Global Rapid Deployment Force," "Sense-and-Respond," "Rapid Decisive Operations," and NATO's "Integrated Event-Driven Rapid Deployment Force."² The essential elements of

¹ Center for International Policy—Colombia Program, *U.S. Aid to Colombia Since 1997: Summary Tables*, (February 20, 2004, available online: <http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/aidtable.htm>, last accessed: September 18, 2004).

² Linda Lewandowski, "Sense and Respond Logistics: Co-Evolution of an Adaptive Enterprise Capability," (presentation, Office of Force Transformation, Department of Defense, Washington D.C., available online: http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library_files/briefing_309_Lewandowski_ndia.pdf, last accessed: September 18, 2004).

an *intelligence-based, rapid deployment force* are intuitively to permit decision makers “to see first, understand first, act first, and win decisively.”³

3. Legacy Force

Legacy force, as utilized herein, refers to a security force, combined with its associated tangibles and intangibles (organizational structures, operating tactics, techniques and procedures, weaponry and culture) that represent a well-established way of doing business. In U.S. military terms, it refers to the practices and paradigms tied to the Cold War era. More broadly, it implies the strict adherence to traditions, methods and technologies of the past, for both sound and unsound reasons.

4. Narcoterrorism/Narcoterrorists

Narcoterrorism is the calculated use of violent acts, tactics and methods (or the threat of their use) against civilians in order to attain goals that are political, ideological, or religious in nature, where such acts of violence, intimidation or coercion are financed by participation in the drug trade. Narcoterrorists are actors who engage in such activities. This term most accurately depicts the complex entanglements of Illegally Armed Groups (IAG) and the activities in which they engage.

5. Transformation

It is more useful to describe than define transformation. The term represents more than change; it demands a shift in mindset to the *continual quest* for new efficiencies and improvements. More than mere adaptation of existing practices or thought, it challenges the very interpretation of current problem sets, and expects to open the door to new solutions. In addition to Undersecretary Feith’s insight above, the Department of Defense (DoD) describes it as “a process that shapes the changing nature of military competition and cooperation through new combinations of *concepts, capabilities, people, and organizations* that exploit our nation’s advantages and protect against our

³ Robert W. Noonan Jr. and Brad T. Andrew, “Army Intelligence Provides the Knowledge Edge,” Army Magazine, (April 2002, online at: <http://www.ausa.org/www/armymag.nsf>, last accessed: September 18, 2004), p. 1.

asymmetric vulnerabilities to sustain our strategic position, which helps underpin peace and stability in the world.”⁴

While militaries in developing nations are unlikely to adopt the same high-technology capabilities as the U.S. military during a process of transformation, the components of the process are still the same. To illustrate, two hypothetical nations replace their 1940’s vintage truck fleet with 1990’s equipment. The first changes only the vehicles. The second nation, anticipating the vehicles’ new capabilities, recognizes and exploits them by changing how they are employed, the units to which they are assigned, determining new maintenance schedules to maximize utilization, and the like. The first nation demonstrated modernization while the second nation exhibited the desired traits of transformation.

D. METHODOLOGY

Colombia’s efforts to create an IBRDF serves as the case study for this project. Colombia has struggled with many issues common to developing countries increasing the likelihood that “lessons learned” from the Colombian case will be applicable to the experiences of other developing nations. Issues such as governmental corruption, poverty, insurgency, porous borders, terrorism and drug/arms trafficking activities are present in Colombia.

Since the Colombian experience is very recent, it is difficult to obtain applicable scholarly information. After action reports, interviews of advisors and Military Group members in Bogotá serve as a primary means of information. Regionally specific text, interviews conducted with Office of the Secretary of Defense (Western Hemisphere), U.S. Southern Command officials, and think tank organizations provided additional information for analysis and conclusions.

⁴ *Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach*, Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD) (Fall 2003, Washington D.C., Available online: <http://www.oft.osd.mil/>, last viewed: September 18, 2004), p. 2.

E. ORGANIZATION

Chapter II first describes the characteristics of the IBRDF model that is being adopted by security forces in many developed countries. It next provides a general threat assessment that has evolved over the past several decades toward smaller, decentralized adversaries. Third, the chapter shows why the U.S. military has deemed this model appropriate for export to many developing countries facing threats from non-state actors. Fourth, the chapter presents both the dissenting opinions, critical of the IBRDF assumptions, as well as augments discounting those critics for use among developing nations. (Chapter IV, which demonstrates the effectiveness of IBRDF in addressing the threat in Colombia, provides a rejoinder to the critics.)

Chapter III uses Colombia as a case study to evaluate transformation within a developing nation. The first section describes Colombia's three principal threats as representative of the new threats facing developed and developing nations alike. The next segment illustrates how Colombia's *legacy force* was ill equipped to deal with the narcoterrorists. The third section describes the adaptive military changes that occurred under President Andres Pastrana (1998-2002) as adaptive, while President Alvaro Uribe (2002-present) oversaw true transformation. This chapter highlights the conditions that made transformation possible in Colombia. President Uribe's determined and centralized leadership is the key to the change, as is the presence of a few moderately visionary military leaders. While a long history of U.S. training of segments of the Colombian military and current U.S. guidance have facilitated the transformation process, Colombian leadership and financing have been the key.

Chapter IV evaluates the extent to which the transformational process has been successful. The first segment reflects the impressive impact of transformation on operations, security and enemy force operations. However, the second portion of the chapter discloses four major obstacles threatening to derail continued progress, including cultural and corruption issues. The third section reveals that Colombia's current progress toward institutionalizing change remains uncertain beyond President Uribe's tenure.

Chapter V highlights those applicable lessons with applicability for other developing nations considering a similar course of action. The four findings are: the critical role of civilian leadership; the benefit of existing core competency; the importance of an obedient military leadership that either actively supports the reform or at least acquiesces to it; and the usefulness of foreign assistance in the form of education and training. Corruption and the challenges of police-military cooperation are likely obstacles to the transformation process in developing countries.

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II. THE THREAT AND U.S. POLICY

The gravest danger to freedom lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology. When the spread of chemical and biological and nuclear weapons, along with ballistic missile technology—when that occurs, even weak states and small groups could attain a catastrophic power to strike great nations. Our enemies have declared this very intention, and have been caught seeking these terrible weapons. They want the capability to blackmail us, or to harm us, or to harm our friends—and we will oppose them with all our power.

President Bush
West Point, New York
June 1, 2002

The 1990s represented limitless possibilities for the American security apparatus. It promised peace and prosperity after the Cold War victory. It also represented a time of emerging threats, uncertainty and redefinition. This chapter serves three purposes. First, it describes the emergence of the growing global threats and explains why the legacy forces of the Cold War era are ill-equipped to defeat these adversaries. Second, this chapter introduces the concepts of the *IBRDF* model, representing agile warfare better suited to defeat the threats described. Finally, it explores the opposition to and support for the use of IBRDF among developing nations.

As Pentagon officials considered a multitude of security issues, the conclusion of the Cold War effectively loosened the lid on order in many regions of the world. What had been dismissively termed *low intensity conflicts* in the 1980s, during the height of the Cold War, was re-coined *military operations other than war* (MOOTW) in the 1990s, and presented a likely indication of the foreseeable threat in a unipolar world. As the number of crises expanded, similar characteristics became increasingly evident -- all of which tie to durability and lethality. The successful groups in the post Cold War era have tended to follow four principles of durability. First, groups emerging in the 1980s and 1990s have found success by decentralizing their organizations; utilizing a flat nodal or cellular structure to assist in blending in to society and avoid detection. Second,

as state sponsorship declined, groups have become financially independent by establishing *charity* groups and/or becoming involved in illicit activities such as narcotics or arms smuggling, prostitution or human smuggling. Rather than dissolve after the Soviet collapse, many actually expanded their coffers. A third characteristic of their durability is the willingness to ally with other illegal or terror organizations to in a mutually beneficial arrangement. More wealthy groups have shown a willingness to pay for expertise or technologically advanced weapons. The situation is further confused by a group's involvement across the spectrum of traditional criminal, terrorist and insurgency activities. In lieu of an updated lexicon, traditional labels assigned by U.S. policy makers fail to reflect reality, and groups successfully avoid international consensus and condemnation. Finally, with the proliferation of technology and materials, groups can forgo recruiting and maintaining a large organization and still possess a horrific lethal capability.

These organizational adaptations are coupled with an increased lethality enabled by technology and a desire to inflict increased destruction. Their offensive operations become more effective by leveraging technology (internet, cell phones, remote triggering devices, global positioning devices), as well as circumventing state technology (closed/family networks, primitive smuggling methods, reliance on barter or cash transactions). Lethality is increased by the years of perfecting tactics that ensure the greatest success rate with their limited resources. While a multitude of bombing tactics are still the preferred means of violence, technology has raised its level of lethality to a new level. While suicide, mortar, timed, and road-side bombs have existed for decades, there has been a proliferation of new methods such as rocket propelled grenades (RPG), shoulder-fired missiles, remotely triggered and hostage (collar or bicycle) bombs. Targeting military personnel and installations, and government officials has given way to more carnage resulting from intentional civilian targeting and human shielding. An increasing number of these groups are religiously motivated rather than politically driven.

A. SECURITY THREATS IN THE POST COLD WAR ERA

Four categories of threats have captured the attention of strategists and military analysts above all others. They include continued threat of insurgency, reinvigorated by financial independence, international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and transnational crime. As evident below, the continued trend is made more worrisome by the common nexus of these actors among several of these categories, leading to a blurring of traditional distinctions. Further, all four threat categories are present to varying degrees in Colombia.

Insurgency, the first of four global threats, reclaimed center stage in numerous countries, and is expected to hold a prominent role as a global threat to peace and security for the foreseeable future. For the purpose of this project, insurgency is defined herein as any politically motivated campaign intended to replace an incumbent form of government, or at a minimum, secure significant influence within the existing system. Unlike religious terrorism, its actors' intend to invoke their own ideology absent any religious extremism. To illustrate the influence insurgency continues to hold, Albert Jongman of Leiden University Netherlands, and the Interdisciplinary Research Program on Causes of Human Rights Violations (or its Dutch abbreviation PIOOM), provide impressive figures of the degree of impact resulting from insurgencies around the world. They define high intensity conflicts (HICs) as those struggles resulting in over 1,000 fatalities per year, low intensity conflicts (LICs) includes between 100 and 1,000 deaths, and violent political conflicts (VPCs) as resulting in between 25 and 100 deaths. In contrast to the situation during the Cold War, sixteen of the seventeen HICs in 1997, qualify as insurgencies (Colombia, Algeria, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Kashmir, Burma, Burundi, Iraq, Assam, Bihar, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Congo-Zaire, Congo-Brazzaville, Rwanda, and Sudan. The violence within the seventeenth nation, Albania, was the result of armed gangs rather than political aspirations.)⁵

⁵ Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism Versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response*, (Frank Cass Publishers, Portland, 2000), p. 4.

The increases in both LICs and VPCs are dramatic since the Cold War, according to PIOOM, as illustrated in Figure 3.1. This trend is strongest in Latin America, Africa and Central Asia, which suffer the majority of insurgency wars. Of 1997's LICs, all but three described intrastate conflicts. The serious nature of the LICs and VPCs should not be underestimated. Although the number killed as part of the direct insurgent effort is does not grab the headlines, large numbers of numbers of victims fall prey to forced displacement, poverty and disease. More disturbing is the estimate that as many as 84 percent of those killed in LICs since 1945 are not combatants, but civilians. According to International Red Cross (ICRC) figures, the number of LIC and VPCs has increased in recent years from an average of 20-25 annually to 65-70. Additionally, the number of people affected by them is increasing by a factor of 10 million annually for the next few years.⁶

	1995	1996	1997
High Intensity Conflicts	20	19	17
Low Intensity Conflicts	39	42	70
Violent Political Conflicts	40	75	74
Total	99	136	161

Figure 2.1 Three-year Survey of Global Conflicts
(From Reference: Paul Wilkinson)

When properly led and equipped, guerrilla warfare has long been an effective method of manipulating government policy makers, affecting economic performance and tying down large numbers of security forces. However, the absence of the Soviet bloc has led to definite changes in the nature of the guerrilla threat and the ability of the government to respond. As funding was lost and priorities shifted, national leaders found themselves forced to contend with the domestic and regional strife largely on their own. Similarly, the once-subsidized leftist groups were forced to adapt to the sudden loss of support or fade away. Insurgency organizations have found innovative means of generating necessary funds, while new organizations have added to the violence. Groups collaborating with each other, establishing or deepening ties with organized crime

⁶ Ibid.

despite previous ideological barriers or are engaging in illicit activity themselves. (cite examples of TBA, al Qaeda and Hezbollah)

Groups will continue to adapt and innovate in order to maintain some measure of support (or tolerance) from the grass-root populace, proportional to their need for recruits, funding and freedom of action. For those groups who must rely more heavily on public sympathy and financial contributions, success depends on its ability to string strategically relevant operations together in order to win popular support, increase solidarity while enticing governmental over reaction. Since this task is quite difficult, we can expect to see the rapid emergence and fall of new groups; *one-hit wonders* if you will.

From an effects-based approach, it is increasingly meaningless to attempt to differentiate between insurgency and terrorism as the end result of their violent tactics and indiscriminate targeting of civilians are identical. The predominant emerging form of insurgency is ethnic or ethno-religious in its underlying purpose. Intrastate ethnic or ethno-religious violence has the potential to develop into the most dangerous situation because of its inherent ability to mobilize quickly and escalate out of control.

International and religious terrorism represents a second principal threat to national security. As with insurgency, terrorism is an old game with some new rules. Terrorism refers to *the acts* of violence against a society in order to coerce or intimidate, as well as implying an *organized movement* that employs such methods of violence to achieve its political or ideological agenda. The latter implies terrorist groups with strategic methodology and goals to challenge state authority and legitimacy. However, it is important to point out that the former definition includes the violent actions of governments themselves, state-sponsored groups, or pro-government paramilitary forces who inflict violence on its own people or the citizens of rival states.

The following lessons of history offer beneficial insight into the evolutionary process of what global terror has evolved to this point. The first category, the “anarchist wave” (1880’s-1925), was made possible by leveraging

new technology. The revolution in communications and transportation patterns enabled the widespread reproduction and distribution of its written ideology. Common methods of terror included assassination campaigns and used frequent bank robberies as source of funding. The “anti-colonial wave” (1920s-1960), sought to target police so as to entice a government to employ its heavy-handed military. This force often overreacted to terrorist attacks, causing a backlash of public condemnation, which advanced the terrorist cause more than the original act of terror. The third wave, “new left” (1960s-1990), in contrast combined anti-West and nationalism to spark revolutions in around the world. The term *international terrorism* was revived as different groups cooperated with one another. The defeat of the U.S. in the Vietnam War and the rise of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) were high points of this wave. Airline hijackings were used to gain international attention, and kidnappings were found a successful means of financing.⁷

In contrast to previous waves, Rapoport asserts the current “religious wave” (1979-present) has produced organizations with a higher level of recruitment and purpose than in previous waves. Although all major religions as well as cults are involved in terrorist events, Islam is the most key religion in this movement. The Iranian Revolution (1979), the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan (1979-89), and the U.S. withdrawal from Beirut (1982) have emboldened Islamic extremists in the belief that they can create a single Islamic state and regain former glory. Another hallmark of this wave is the deliberate targeting of military and government installations of both foreign and domestic states.⁸ Religious terrorists, unlike those of the *new left* or *anti-colonial waves* do not seek rewards on earth, such as state concessions and political influence. Followers instead seek to honorably endure adversity so as to be pleasing before God, and thereby receive eternal rewards. This religious conviction not only gives them strength but also interprets any move towards moderation as treasonous.

⁷ David W. Rapoport, “The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11,” in *The New Global Terrorism; Characteristics, Causes and Controls*, Charles W. Kegley, Jr. ed. (Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2003), pp. 36-44.

⁸ Ibid.

The take-away of this cursory overview of history is that organizations adapt and learn from successful predecessors, just as states adapt to defeating these groups. The tactics employed today emphasize the most deadly variations of bombing, kidnapping, taking of hostages, arson, assault, and hijacking. Numerous other sub-categories of terrorism receive less press, but the potential effects are equally horrific, such as agricultural and nanoterrorism. Innovations include the use of the internet as a breakthrough method of spreading a message to the masses, just as the first wave used newspapers and transportation. Contemporary groups continue to frustrate states, causing them to overreact, as in the second wave. Unparalleled cooperation between terrorist organizations is also working to challenge efforts to counter these groups. State sovereignty issues and international laws have not evolved as quickly as terror groups have exploited these deficiencies.

Other analysts differentiate the terrorism seen in the 1990s as uniquely set apart from earlier decades. Determined leadership, innovatively organized to maximize survivability and lethality, exemplified in the al Qaeda structural model. Rather than the traditionally hierarchical command structure, it has instead opted to utilize a flat, decentralized structure. These *cells* depend on the autonomous and stealthy nature of the group for survival and lethality. Prior to September 11, 2001, al Qaeda was reportedly located in over 60 nations. They seized upon inefficiencies in U.S. intelligence gathering and detection systems, facilitated by steady globalization trends; open markets, frequent business travel, and lax U.S. customs tracking. Since 9-11, over 2,000-suspected operatives have been apprehended while many more disappeared. It must be expected that the surviving organization is morphing once again into a more loosely affiliated network, pushing more authority and resources to local levels. Like a virus, terrorists groups either die or mutate in order to survive. When not completely eradicated we should expect the return of a different, more resilient and resistant form. Al Qaeda's centers of gravity, as with many of the religious terrorist groups, lies in its: a) reputation as effectively able to hit a common enemy; 2)

effective leadership; 3) finances in order to conduct operations, welfare efforts, both of which serve recruiting propaganda purposes; and 4) global presence able to exert force anywhere.⁹

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) proliferation represents the third category of increasing threats which can be further broken into two areas of concern; state versus non-state acquisition. A state's decision to pursue chemical, biological, radiological, and/or nuclear (CBRN) weapons is generally motivated by the rational evaluation of its self-interest. These interests may originate from the perceived need of defensive or offensive purposes, to raise national status equal to other *have* nations, to resist being pressured, or possibly the intent to market the technology to would-be buyers. U.S. policy makers wishing to identify which motives apply can infer based upon the doctrine, launch authorities, safety measures and perceived threats of various nations' CBRN armament. For example, North Korea appears to view their arsenal in an offensive, integrated manner, while Israel views nuclear weapons as weapons of last resort, going so far as to not include them in any wartime operational plans.¹⁰ Other nuclear states of interest include Pakistan and India both of which tested nuclear weapons in 1998, and which continue to engage in confrontations with the other (e.g. May 1998, March 2003). Pakistan's security is also a point of concern, as Dr. Abdul Qadeer (A.Q.) Khan, *father of the Islamic bomb*, was exposed for selling nuclear technologies to North Korea, Iran and Libya. Concern over Russia's stockpile security, accountability and destruction programs has existed since the Cold War's end, but the desire of state and non-state actors to obtain such technology has heightened the anxiety.

The acquisition of CBRN by non-state actors poses a greater concern due to the belief that terrorists would expend valuable resources and expose themselves to high risk only if they intended to use the weapons, either to blackmail a state(s) or deliberately detonate a device(s) for the purpose of killing

⁹ Brian M. Jenkins, *Countering Al Qaeda: an Appreciation of the Situation and Suggestions for Strategy* (Rand, Santa Monica CA, 2002), pp. 6-15.

¹⁰ Peter R. Lavoy, Scott D. Sagan, and James J. Wirtz, *Planning the Unthinkable*, (Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 2000), p. 233.

tens of thousands. Japan's Aum Shinrikyo cult foreshadowed, in their partially successful 1995 sarin attack, what other groups such as al Qaeda would like to accomplish on a much larger scale. In the 1970s, tens died in the worst terrorist incidents, hundreds in the 1980's and 1990s, and thousands in the attacks of September 11, 2001. If successfully employed, WMD provides terrorists a viable means to increase the death rate once again to tens of thousands. The coalition operations in Afghanistan revealed al Qaeda's aspirations to acquire chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

Fears of bio-terrorist attacks turned to reality when a perpetrator sent anthrax-laden letters to target recipients in the news media and government. While the timing of this series of events caused many to suspect al Qaeda, no evidence directly tied it to these attacks. The proliferation of science and genetic engineering has made existing biological agents even more potent, infectious, and dangerous than before. Variations include the manufacturing of new strains and cocktails combining different agents present further complications for first responders. Additionally, an outbreak can be masked for some time in order to multiply its effects. Devastating attacks need not be waged by complex organizations any longer. Individual actors, such as Ted Kaczynski, or very small groups, such as Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, are much more difficult to detect, adding a layer of complexity to security. Enabled by technology and communication, an unprecedented amount of destruction can be levied by only one or two individuals, whether motivated by ideology or greed.

Transnational crime, a fourth principal threat, is comprised of numerous illicit activities, including narcotics and arms trafficking, human smuggling, money laundering, and the like. A traditional view of crime has described it as a parasite, feeding off the host (nation), but not intending to destroy it, whereas terrorist and insurgents represent the lethal threat as they wish to bring about total destruction of the host (nation). While the primary results of crime may support such an assertion, the second and third order effects on society, government, judicial process, linkages to clandestine organizations described above and similar crippling effects clearly lead to a degeneration of a state's

ability to fulfill its legitimate governing roles. The immediate byproducts of crime breed corruption of governmental officials, violence and instability on society, forfeiture of economic investment and development, and increased black marketeering which bypasses taxation.

From a U.S. strategic perspective, the proliferation of transnational crime can effectively nullify the desired effects of State Department assistance and Defense Department engagement programs. If allowed to deteriorate, the United States can lose a strategic ally, denying us of another critical access point. Once corruption gains a foothold within government, a common cycle of a failed state begins that is difficult to break. Corruption erodes a state's legitimacy, further accelerated as lost revenue and investment prevents the delivery the goods and services expected by its population. Its failure to deliver goods and security widens the social fissures between government and citizens, and provides an opportunity for terrorists, insurgents or criminals to build a larger constituency. A failing state typically responds by entrenching itself rather than reaching out to its populace, causing further isolation. Somewhere in the cycle, a state becomes unable to combat the issues of corruption and judicial failures. Their focus turns to self-preservation just as their citizens need protection from the predatory tactics of these criminals. Caribbean, Latin American and African nations experience far more lives lost annually due to criminal violence than are lost waging terrorist or insurgency attacks, not to mention the crippling effects of crime on the economy.¹¹

Motivated by greed, criminal groups have successfully adapted to the changing environment as well. One such innovation is the increased cooperation and synergistic relationship forged between criminal groups and terrorist and/or insurgency groups. The tri-border region of Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina illustrates this mixture of interests. Lebanese, Hong Kong, Korean and Chinese

¹¹ Andrew Morrison, Mayra Buvinic and Michael Shifter, "The Violent Americas: Risk Factors, Consequences, and Policy Implications of Social and Domestic Violence," in Hugo Fruhling, Joseph S. Tulchin, and Heather A. Golding, *Crime and Violence in Latin America: Citizen Security, Democracy and the State*, (Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington D.C., 2003), pp. 96-114.

mafias are among the seventeen criminal groups present, in addition to six Islamic radical groups (IRGs; Hamas, Hizbollah, al Qaeda, Al-Jihad, Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, and al-Muqawamah). At stake is an annual average of US\$12 billion in money laundering alone as of 2001. The symbiotic relationship drives the groups to capitalize on the joint efforts of drug and arms smuggling, contraband, product piracy, and the like in a virtual lawless land.¹² This cooperation ensures all parties benefit to some degree. It is estimated that the collective gain of the IRGs is between US\$300-500 million per year. Similar arrangements are being forged Europe, Africa and Asia.¹³

The increasing sophistication is further complicated by the ability of these groups to exploit gaps in state sovereignty regions, border disputes, and lack of progress in international law or consensus to combat these threats. However, even if international law matured and states cooperated to diplomatically close these opportunities, the large Cold War-era security force structures remain woefully mismatched against these smaller, decentralized forces.

B. LEGACY FORCE INADEQUACIES

Prominent officials, including two consecutive Central Intelligence Directors (DCI), James Woolsey (1994) and John Deutch (1996), warned of a new era of terrorism far more lethal and bloody than before. However, these predictions failed to materialize in a timely manner. To the contrary, the numbers of U.S. citizens killed in the 1990s sharply dropped off to 87 (in 1,372 attacks against U.S. targets), as opposed to 571 killed in the 1980s (in 1,701 such attacks).¹⁴ This was hardly the statistical evidence required to build a consensus for increased budgetary allocations. Instead, there was a decrease in intelligence operative and analyst positions. Compared to the familiarity of the

¹² Rex Hudson, "Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of South America," (Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, July 2003), pp. 1-20.

¹³ Tamara Makarenko, "On the Border of Crime and Insurgency," *Jane's International Review* (January 1, 2002, posted December 18, 2001, last viewed March 3, 2004), pp 1-3.

¹⁴ Bruce Hoffman, "Combating Terrorism: In Search of a National Strategy," (RAND Testimony, Presented to the Subcommittee on National Security Veterans Affairs, and International Relation, House Committee on Government Reform, March 27, 2001), p. 4.

Soviet opponent, the United States lacked the detailed intelligence on these new foes, operating under “elusive banners such as the *Red Army Faction*, the *Red Brigades*, the *Armed Forces of the National Liberation*, the *Revolutionary Armed Forces*, and the *Revolutionary War of the People*, the *Popular Front*, and the *Holy War*.”¹⁵

Organized in nodes and cells, groups successfully eluded capture by both blending into communities and dispersing to austere locations. They gained strength as the narcotics industry boomed, religious extremism and anti-West sentiments accelerated, and further perfected the decentralized, elusive and unconventional force model. The legacy forces forged during the Cold War, the mass tanks, ships and infantry formations, proved poorly matched against their asymmetric tactics. Instead of pitched battles for air and sea supremacy, societies watched the execution of hostages, bombing of embassies, assassinations of officials, and hijackings of airliners replayed in the headlines.

America was also involved in conflicts in Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo, concurrent with the decade-long Northern and Southern Watch missions during the 1990s. Apart from the conventional-style Gulf War, the world’s premier military was ill prepared, reactionary, and awkward. Lacking decisive military objectives in these austere conflicts, defensive policies emphasized force preservation and victory was left undefined. Pentagon officials, who had previously resisted the entanglements of open-ended, *nation-building* missions, progressively realized that their legacy force was inappropriate to contend with the reality of emerging threats. The changing world and civilian leadership required the creation of a relevant arsenal for the coming century. The revolution in military affairs (RMA) was initiated during the first half of the 1990s, as DOD commissioned numerous think tanks to recommend transformational concepts able to meet the changing environment. As Andrew Krepinevich concluded in 1999, such “support has not been translated into a defense program supporting

¹⁵ Brian M. Jenkins, “International Terrorism and the Other World War,” in *the New Global Terrorism; Characteristics, Causes and Controls*, Charles W. Kegley, Jr. (Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2003), p. 15.

transformation...Thus one can only conclude that, in the absence of a strong external shock to the U.S. defense establishment, surmounting the barriers to transformation will likely prove a long, arduous process.”¹⁶ On September 11, 2001, the shock came and rocked the entrenched mindsets and institutions; doctrine, war plans, funding and acquisition programs, troop strength and basing. The need to correct deficiencies in intelligence and response became the focus of this next phase of transformation.

European and NATO forces encountered similar challenges as they attempted to redefine themselves in light of the new environment. In response, European nations experimented with varying strategic-level responses, such as punishing state sponsors through economic sanctions, discrediting them diplomatically, sharing intelligence information with other nations, and employment of military force. Lacking a unified international effort, nations experienced mixed results.

Developing nations also struggled to identify the correct role for their militaries, amidst various histories and civil-military relations issues. In 1992, for example, Argentina concluded very little threat existed internally or externally. The Ecuadorian military, on the other hand, was charged with preparing for not only internal and external threats, but also contribute to the nation’s socioeconomic development, in accordance with the 1978 Constitution.¹⁷ From the 1980s to the mid-1990s, the frustration felt by Colombian national forces in an effort to defeat their insurgency manifested itself through numerous accusations of human rights abuses by government forces and/or their tacit consent of paramilitary violence.

¹⁶ Andrew Krepinevich, “Why No Transformation?” *The National Interest* (February 4, 1999, available from: http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/Archive/A.19990204.Why_No_Transformat/A.19990204.Why_No_Transformat.htm, accessed 9 August 2004), p. 7.

¹⁷ J. Samuel Fitch, *Armed Forces and Democracy in Latin America* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD, 1998), pp. 117-119.

C. UNDERSTANDING THE INTELLIGENCE BASED RAPID DEPLOYMENT FORCE (IBRDF) CONCEPT

In response to the new threat environment of the post Cold War era, the U.S. military began a process of transformation in the 1990s that has only accelerated since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Efforts to transform endured a flurry of concepts and titles. Once referred to as Joint Contingency Force Operations, the multifaceted *Rapid Decisive Operations* (RDO) concept has survived the test of time in an evolution of change. It articulates perfecting of several ideals, which if accomplished would be truly transformational.

Rapid Decisive Operations is a concept for future joint operations. A rapid decisive operation will integrate knowledge, command and control, and operations to achieve the desired political/military effect. In preparing for and conducting a rapid decisive operation, the military acts in concert with and leverages the other instruments of national power to understand and reduce the adversary's critical capabilities and coherence. The United States and its allies asymmetrically assault the adversary from directions and in dimensions against which he has no counter, dictating the terms and tempo of the operation. The adversary, suffering from loss of coherence, operational capabilities, and unable to achieve his objectives, ceases actions that are against US interests or has his capabilities defeated.¹⁸

In sum, RDO requires unprecedented preparation of a battle space through intelligence, leading to the offensive, precise attacks on the enemy's critical nodes, putting him permanently on his heels until defeated or his will to fight is broken. The two cornerstones of RDO rely first on acquiring reliable, actionable intelligence, and secondly the capability to respond immediately. The implications equate to improvements in air, land and sea maneuverability, communications, precision munitions, detection, and formation of more lethal and agile forces.

¹⁸ *Rapid Decisive Operations (RDO) White Paper*, United States Joint Forces Command (JFCOM), J9 Joint Futures Lab, Final Draft (version 2.0), (October 25, 2001, available at https://www.daml.org/2002/01/experiment/RDO_White_Paper.pdf, accessed 4 August 2004), p. 11.

The Role of Intelligence. As General Peter Pace was fond of saying while Commander of U.S. Southern Command, “Intelligence drives ops.” Intelligence efforts are fundamentally designed to fulfill two roles. First, in the traditional sense, it strives to provide information superiority, and ultimately decision superiority to senior officials. The ability to collect, process, evaluate, and integrate this information not only provides leaders with offensive lethality, but also strengthens defensive and deterrence. Deliberately planned and executed offensive maneuvers are designed to overwhelm and incapacitate the enemy long enough to accomplish the desired effects. Policy makers may also leverage superior intelligence to gain non-violent options of targeting the legitimacy of enemy by manipulating or negating underlying factors of support and recruitment.

The second role of intelligence is maximized by pushing information to lower levels. Intelligence is no longer reserved for top-level commanders for incorporation into strategic or operational plans. Instead, when fed directly to the users, it provides specific indicators at specific times in order to shape the battlefield at all levels, including tactical levels. Enlightened with intelligence, operators can choose the time, location, method, then tailor a strike package to hit an enemy’s critical points.

The Role of Rapid Deployment. Intelligence superiority without the ability to rapidly respond to perishable commodity is useless. Rapid mobility provides both offensive and defense advantages. Offensively, speed and agility combine the long-standing principles of war--offense, mass, maneuver, economy of force and surprise, affording operators the capability to immediately strike time-sensitive opportunities and deny the enemy space and time to recover.¹⁹ From a defensive perspective, rapid mobility denies the enemy a certainty of knowledge that a situation is as it appears. Reinforcements can appear without warning, and overwhelming force is selectively applied rather than isolated, disbursement of assets.

¹⁹ “Joint Warfare of the US Armed Forces,” *Joint Pub 1*, (National Defense University Press November 11, 1991), p. 21.

Synergy. Finally, it is essential to combine both intelligence and speed in order to gain the necessary synergy required defeat this new enemy; to deny the enemy sanctuary, surprise, and the ability to survive. The desired effect is to inflict casualties to their belligerents and intolerable pressure on their organization to such a degree they are unable to survive. Adversarial leaders are expected to make mistakes when under extreme pressure for an extended time, revealing weaknesses ripe for exploitation. Rand analyst, David Ochmanek, wrote that one of the essential lessons learned in past counterinsurgency efforts is the need to apply “relentless” pressure on the groups. When applied for extended periods of time, insurgents are forced to turn their efforts from planning strategic attacks to basic evasion and survival. IBRDF is designed to for just that purpose.

D. CRITIQUES OF IBRDF

Critics of the IBRDF model generally focus on several assumptions required for its success, four of which are addressed below. The first assumption implies future threats will be conducive to quick, decisive options. The one-size-fits-all legacy force repeatedly failed to provide policy makers with viable force options from the 1960s through the 1980s. The reality of recent decades indicates peacekeeping, peacemaking and other longer-term conflicts will continue as prominent DoD missions for the foreseeable future. The overwhelming U.S. technology in Iraq, for example, is helping to win battles but the strategic objectives can only be achieved through extended presence and force application across a broad spectrum. Similarly, a policy of gradual escalation was selected in Kosovo in order to retain the international coalition and cause Slobodan Milosevic to acquiesce. Critics assert, the assumption that future operations will be decisive is poorly conceived.

The second assumption may well be the Achilles heel in presuming to possess near-certain knowledge of all potential enemies; sufficient to anticipate and act any time, any place. Both technologies and human intelligence have disappointed thus far. Thirdly, the model assumes that the adversary possesses

identifiable critical nodes that are defeated with a few well-placed strikes. History clearly points to the difficulty of one nation correctly identifying which elements are in fact critical, and then effectively targeting them. Finally, critics question the ability to consistently combine and focus national power in a manner that is both rapid and decisive.

These arguments are arguably valid for developed nations, especially a hegemonic nation such as the United States who must stand ready to respond to global events. However, they are much less applicable to most developing nations. In fact, if a developing nation that is progressing technologically, the IBRDF evidence appears favorable. Even RDO critics acknowledge the overwhelming potential in operations that are viewed as high-end, smaller scale contingency operations such as Operations Urgent Fury (1983, Grenada), Just Cause (1988, Panama), and Uphold Democracy (1994, Haiti), and as well as larger conventional situations such as Operation Desert Storm (1991, Iraq/Kuwait).²⁰

Taking the points one-by-one, the developing nation is not concerned with preparing a diverse global response strategy for an unknown enemy. Rather, it is generally familiar with its adversary, which tends to be an external state neighbor, in cases of border disputes, or internal threats of terrorism, crime, and/or insurgency.

Second, narrowing the possible adversaries to a potential few allows even unsophisticated nations to maintain detailed knowledge of key leadership, orders of battle, and the like. Parties commonly share a cultural similarity which adds further insight into critical nodes and decision processes, addressed in the third objection. Finally, critics are specifically addressing the United States when discussing the difficulty in mobilizing or focusing national assets in light of global commitments. It is reasoned that a developing nation, lacking extensive international entanglements, is able to consolidate its forces on the threat at

²⁰ Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Rapid Decisive Operations; Assumption-Based Critique* (Strategic Studies Institute, November 2001, ISBN 1-58487-073-7, available from: <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pubs/pubResult.cfm/hurl/PubID=218/>, accessed 8 August 2004), p. 5.

hand. Whether the nation feels threatened is a matter beyond IBRDF. Regarding rapid mobilization, that is a fundamental solution offered by IBRDF.

III. COLOMBIAN SECURITY FORCE TRANSFORMATION

*This ain't no Vietnam. I wish it were; it would be easier.*²¹

Gen (R) Charles Wilhelm, USMC
Former Commander, U.S. Southern Command
June 2000

What a difference a few key people and a couple years make. Security threat assessments have significantly improved since 2001, when the theme of many Latin America reports trumpeted Colombia's imminent paralysis, if not complete failure. This chapter tells the story of the Colombian military's near defeat in the mid-1990s and its return from the brink in the years since. The first section describes Colombia's three principal threats as representative of the new threats facing developed and developing nations alike. The next segment illustrates how Colombia's *legacy force* was ill equipped to deal with the new challenges posed by these threats in the mid-1990s. The third section shows how the military began to adapt under President Pastrana (1998-2002), but truly only entered a period of transformation under President Uribe (2002-present).

A. COLOMBIAN THREAT ASSESSMENT

Convincing military defeats and the slaughter of national police outposts in the countryside foretold the coming failure of the region's oldest democracy. "A [1998] Defense Intelligence Agency study warned that if nothing changed, FARC could take over the country in five years."²² The three groups below represent a long and intricately woven past, too complex to unravel in the space allowed. Readers should resist narrowly categorizing any group as purely ideological or wholly profit oriented. Just as FARC/ELN or AUC members participate in the narcotics trade to varying degrees, there are those drug operatives who share ties with either left or rightwing group.

²¹ Dana Priest, *The Mission; Waging War and Keeping Peace with America's Military*, (W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 2003), p. 206.

²² Dana Priest, p. 211.

1. FARC

Colombia's illegally armed groups (IAG) are typically divided into three categories. The left side of the spectrum, termed simply as insurgents or guerrillas, are principally comprised by the FARC (15,000-18,000-strong), but also include the much smaller National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, or ELN; 5,000-6,000-strong), and remnants of the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), the April 19 Movement (M-19), Worker's Self-Defense (ADO), and the Worker's Revolutionary Party (PRT).

FARC members trace their roots back to the Marquetalia Raid of 1964, where 16,000 government troops massacred a community of 1,000, of which less than 50 were armed.²³ This peasant Communist movement formally established the FARC in 1966, but was of little concern to most Colombians. The conflict remained confined to the sparsely populated rural regions, and the 75% urban population expected the Colombian Army (COLAR) to keep these groups in check and away from their daily life.

Organizationally, the FARC successfully adapted and innovated in response to many challenges. Adhering to Maoist strategy, they adapted by utilizing the southeastern savannah and jungle as refuge, and then cultivated a mass peasant support base in the disenfranchised rural portions of the country.²⁴ They regrouped and gained attention as their numbers grew. In 1982, those who advocated capitalizing on the narcotics revenues finally overcame those who warned against its corrupting influence. Once this ideological barrier was removed, taxation measures, and later direct involvement, wielded the resources and power necessary to demand national attention. This 1982 decision literally paid dual dividends. First, it provided financial independence, insulating them from potential effects of the abrupt collapse of the Soviet Union. Second, they were ideally poised to exploit market opportunities when the Cali and Medellin

²³ Center for International Policy Online—Colombia Program, *Information about the Combatants*, (Last Updated: August 27, 2002; available from: <http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/inforcombat.htm>, accessed 20 September 2004), p. 3.

²⁴ Thomas Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency* (January 2002), p. 3.

Cartels fell in the early-to-mid 1990s.²⁵ In 1982, the FARC comprised of only 15 fronts and only 2,000 fighters. Marking their rapid growth, they expanded to 43 fronts and approximately 5,000 fighters by 1990. By 2002, they had continued to grow to 66 fronts.²⁶ The key reason for this rapid expansion “was the development of a stable and lucrative source of financing its activities –the drug trade—by extracting protection money from coca grower and the operators of clandestine landing fields and laboratories, along with kidnapping.”²⁷

“By late 1998, the main rebel groups – the FARC and the ELN – were well financed and equipped by hundreds of small cartels that had sprung up in 1993 after Escobar was killed.”²⁸ Estimates of narcotics-related revenue generated for the guerrillas vary widely. One *Institute for National Strategic Studies* report published in 1997, estimated between US\$500 million to \$1.5 billion in annual income. A subsequent report estimated the drug-related income as low as US\$30-\$100 million, but most reports settle on the US\$400-\$600 million per year figure.²⁹ Colombian officials estimate that drug-related income represents approximately half of their total revenue, with kidnapping ransoms, robberies, and extortion methods completing the difference. What began as an insignificant ideological group, by the mid-1990s, had gradually created numerous base areas and totaled approximately 16,500 combatants (plus another 8,000-10,000 local militia members), capable of executing coordinated mobility warfare.³⁰

The lowering of the ideological standard came with a price as well, which has set the two key centers of gravity, financial independence and public support, at odds with each other. For several FARC blocs, the focus on generating revenue has eclipsed the traditional advancement of Marxist ideology, thereby

²⁵ Tom Marks, “Colombian Army Counterinsurgency,” *Crime, Law & Social Change*, Vol. 40, (2003), pp. 77-105.

²⁶ Thomas Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency*, p. 7.

²⁷ Gabriel Marcella and Donald Schulz, *Colombia’s Three Wars: US Strategy at the Crossroads*, March 5, 1999, p. 11.

²⁸ Dana Priest, p. 207.

²⁹ Nina M. Serafino, “Colombia: Conditions and U.S. Policy Options,” *Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress*, (Updated February 12, 2001), p. CRS-12.

³⁰ Tom Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency*, p. 7.

leading to the atrophy of its political structure. It has permitted the vicious killing of innocent peasants – the very people it set out to liberate – in an attempt to expand their influence. In other words, the often corrupt and repressive guerrillas have simply replaced the corrupt and repressive officials of the *La Violencia* period.

For the purpose of this project, it is necessary to evaluate the FARC organization against the effectiveness and strengths of the IBRDF model. Considering the FARC from a structural perspective, the organization follows a definite hierarchical model. Their commander, Manuel Marulanda Velez, alias Tirofijo or “Sureshot,” leads the organization. A seven-member *secretariat* coordinates strategic control, and each member is dual-hatted as the leader of one of the seven large, regional *bloques*. The *secretariat* reports to the *Estado Mayor Central*, or central command, comprised of 25 members (assigned number varies). Using a legitimate corporation analogy, “Tirofijo” is the CEO; the *secretariat* acts as the board of directors, while the central command represents the shareholders. Under each *bloque*, several *fronts* exist (66-67 in total) to execute local operations.³¹ Under each *front* is a *commission* (which exercises control over the local *militia*), a *mobile company* (representing the *fronts* personal offensive arm), and at least two *columns*. Each *column* is finally divided into two *companies*. *Militias* (under commission control) serve intelligence, propaganda, logistics functions, as well as carry out extortion and financing rackets. It is believed that members have infiltrated many government and military offices. *Company* guerrillas are uniformed members likely to carry out roadblocks for kidnapping targets, or launch attacks on civilian and/or government forces. The hierarchical FARC organizational structure is depicted in Figure 3.1.

³¹ Ibid. 79.

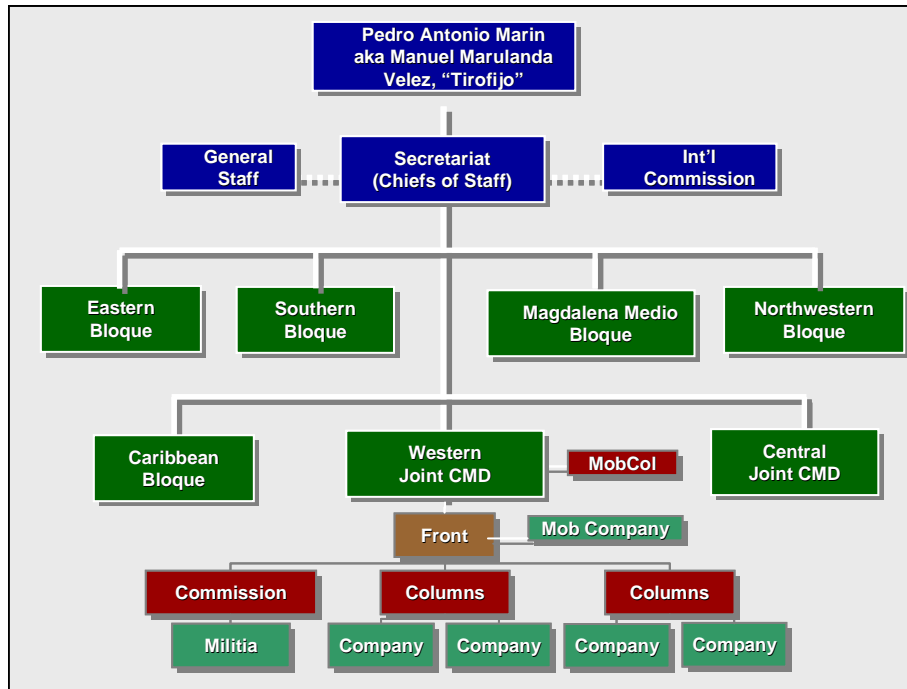


Figure 3.1 FARC Organizational Structure
(After Reference: Thomas Marks, "Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency")

The *fronts* are both self-sufficient and contributing to the hierarchy of the organization. The various *fronts* and *bloques* play different roles within the overall organization. Each employs different revenue generating methods based on geography, population and opportunity. *Bloques* located near highways or populations rely more heavily on kidnappings and extortion, whereas areas that are more rural tend to rely more on the drug related activities.

Many FARC fronts are well equipped with high-powered firearms (AK-47s, AKMs, Galils, and FALs), heavy machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades (PRGs), mortars, explosives (C-4), chemical weapons, and likely possess shoulder-fired missiles or manpads, while others carry outdated or barely-serviceable weapons.³² However, the rapid growth in manpower and revenue provided the means to escalate methods of warfare.

However, the FARC was almost eradicated in the late 1960s, when the government of Colombia (GOC) and the U.S. forces successfully prosecuted the

³² Ibid. 90.

Marxist insurgency, severely weakening the organization.³³ Short of complete resolution, the ruling class abrogated *management* of the insurgency to the military with the expectation to keep the guerrillas from affecting urban life, which they generally succeeded in doing. Over a 40-year generation, Colombians became accustomed to the pain of this *unpleasant-but-removed* conflict. The cities provided a barrier for three-quarters of the population, including the wealthy elite. The proverbial walls caused a sense of security that arguably still exists today for much of the political elite. This is evident in the 2002 elections, where neither of the two established political parties campaigned on the issue of facing the insurgency as a war. Rather, an independent candidate won an unprecedented landslide victory because the general population identified with his message to confront and end the conflict.

Battlefield Victories. On December 21, 1997, 100-200 guerrillas attacked an Army platoon defending their communications base atop Patascoy Hill. Surprise, mobility and mass combined to easily overwhelm the conscript force, killing 11 and capturing 18. However, the battle of El Billar (February 26 – 3 March 1998), pitted three companies (153 men) of the 52nd Counterinsurgency battalion of the newly formed 3rd Mobile Brigade (3 BRIM) against the FARC. They were ordered to disrupt 450 massing guerrillas. Rather than scatter, the FARC set up a 'U'-shaped ambush and succeeded in luring them in. A second perimeter was established to defeat any reinforcing attempts by the COLAR. For the last four days the troops were assaulted and reinforcements repelled. The FARC claimed to have killed 80 troops and captured 43 others.³⁴

The FARC mobilized a nation-wide campaign in coordination with the ELN, concurrent with the August 1998, elections. Over 42 attacks occurred in the first week, across 14 of the nation's departments. Guerrillas demonstrated the ability to mass five fronts (1,200 troops) against two targets simultaneously at Joaquin Paris Battalion and the co-located police base at Miraflores, Guaviare.

³³ Dennis M. Rempe, "The Past as Prologue? A History of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in Colombia, 1958-66," *Strategic Studies Institute* (March 2002).

³⁴ David Spencer, "Bogotá Continues to Bleed as FARC Find Their Military Feet," *Jane's Intelligence Digest* (Jane's Intelligence Review, vol. 010, issue. 011, November 1, 1998), p. 35.

Attacks at La Uribe (three fronts, or 800 guerrillas) and Pavorando, (two fronts, or 600 fighters), sent a clear message that the FARC were capable of attacking small to medium sized fortifications and could match the government forces boot-to-boot in open combat.³⁵ New FARC methods also demonstrated a confidence to fight *above the horizon* rather than their previous hit-and-run, guerrilla-style warfare. At the conclusion of that single week, 143 members of the security forces were dead and over 130 more were captured.³⁶

With the FARC summarily striking at will, the rural peasants responded. “Ergo, we find ourselves back at the autodefensas, who – authorized or no, legal or not – have filled the gap and engaged in some of the most vicious fighting against FARC (and ELN).”³⁷

2. AUC

The FARC’s opponents on the right of the spectrum are numerous paramilitary organizations, loosely affiliated with one another under the AUC umbrella (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, or Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia). Now touting 20,000 members, the AUC is growing at a rate much faster than the FARC, quadrupling in size since 1998.³⁸ Their rapid growth began in the late 1990s, which coincided with FARC successes against government forces, arguably contributing to their rapid growth. First, when the government demonstrates its inability to deal with the guerrilla problem those with much to lose (wealthy land owners) actively mobilize the peasant population either out of fear and/or opportunity to balance the left-wing success. Fear of guerrilla murder, kidnappings and extortion, and opportunity in the power vacuum to expand their influence and wealth. The second reason: AUC success breeds AUC recruits. The backlash of FARC atrocities fertilizes the AUC recruiting grounds (a principal that cuts both ways), but personal motives aside, people will

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ian Kemp, “Military Leaders are Replaced in Colombia,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, (vol. 030, issue. 007, London, August 19, 1998), p. 8.

³⁷ Thomas Marks, “Colombian Army Counterinsurgency,” p. 95.

³⁸ *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – South America*, “Internal Affairs – Colombia,” (date posted: August 17, 2004, available from: <http://www2.janes.com/K2/results.jsp>, accessed: September 6, 2004).

rationality join the winning side in order to share in the spoils. Finally, like the FARC, the AUC attract youth from neglected portions of society without a hopeful future. The AUC unabashedly seized upon the drug trade as its means of a stable and lucrative means of income. It is well equipped and can attract willing fighters, if not for ideological reasons, then for an escape from a peasant's life, excitement, revenge, a pseudo family, and money. It too has expanded its direct involvement in coca cultivation. Leaders make no excuse for executing, abducting, and intimidating their primary targets, which include guerrillas, and suspected guerrilla supporters and sympathizers. The AUC maintained strong presence in northeastern Colombia – a traditional ELN stronghold – and is often credited for much of the ELN's recent decline.³⁹ The AUC has expanded incursions into Southern Colombia, directly challenging the FARC for control of coca cultivation in one of their traditional stronghold regions.

This rapid growth rate is cause for serious security concern not only to human rights organizations but to the military as well. Colombian General, Fernando Tapias, Armed Forces Commander, estimated that the AUC would be the number one threat for the government by 2005.⁴⁰ Government forces have had difficulty shedding alleged AUC ties, reportedly condoning and collaborating in some of the world's most egregious acts. According to human rights groups, the AUC is responsible for the greatest number of extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances since 1995.⁴¹ Structurally, the AUC appears to favor a more decentralized model than the FARC. The affiliation and loyalty of the one hundred-plus smaller organizations allows for more autonomy.

3. Illicit Traffickers

The apolitical third group, the traffickers, forms the nexus between both sides of the IAG spectrum. In addition to narcotics trafficking, these profit-driven criminals take part in arms and human smuggling. They do business with

³⁹ Kim Cragin, Bruce Hoffman, *Arms Trafficking and Colombia*, (Rand, National Defense Research Institute, 2003), pp. 6-7.

⁴⁰ Center for International Policy Online—Colombia Program; *Information About the Combatants*, p. 7.

⁴¹ Nina M. Serafino, pp. 8-9.

whichever group can ensure maximum profit and protection of their products. For example, fellow leaders of the Norte Del Valle (NDV; successor to much of the Medellin cartel interests) cartel each have links to opposing IAGs.⁴² At the time of writing, the narcotics researchers, in adapting to eradication efforts, have developed a much larger, herbicide-resistant coca plants while simultaneously growing crops in much smaller size fields so as to avoid detection.⁴³ Like the AUC, they do not espouse overthrowing the government, as is the goal of the FARC and ELN, but the negative social-economic effects are evident in increased corruption of officials, ties with Chinese and Russian mafias (as well as many others), lost legitimate business and its contribution to society. The continued influx of money and arms further fuels to cycle of violence. This group is relevant to this project to the extent that narcotics fuel the groups that threaten the state and IBRDF are tasked with counterdrug (CD) missions to defeat them.

B. COLOMBIAN LEGACY FORCE

A prominent feature of Colombia's security forces throughout the 1980s and 1990s was the absence of direction. Without a coherent national security strategy from which to draw upon, the Ministry of Defense (MOD) lacked guidance and initiative to articulate a lucid military strategy. Absent these clearly defined requirements, congress failed to sufficiently fund the MOD. This section describes how the lack of this strategic compass allowed leaders to drift into stagnant, reactionary missions, ineffective in the war effort.

1. Structure & Employment

Until the mid-1980s, the COLAR consisted of ten infantry and one training brigades. By the end of the decade, they had added three brigades (two infantry and one logistics support). Administratively, they restructured into four divisional headquarters (Santa Marta, Bucaramanga, Cali and Villavicencio), but stopped

⁴² *Jane's Foreign Report – May 20, 2004*, "New Job for Colombia's Private Armies," [Online] (date posted: May 18, 2004, available from: <http://frp.janes.com/docs/frp/americas.shtml>, accessed 20 September 2004).

⁴³ Cesar Garcia, "New Possible Threat in Drug War," *Associated Press* (September 1, 2004, available from: http://www.fox23news.com/news/world/story.aspx?content_id=5544548C-1346-4979-ABBB-87E83B71DC1E, accessed 6 September 2004).

short of making operational or tactical functional changes. In 1992, the government announced plans for a multi-million dollar modernization program as well as an increase in the Army's troop strength from approximately 120,000 to 160,000. During this critical decade however, the end-strength by 1999, remained at 121,000.⁴⁴ The other services included a 15,000-person Navy (including 7-8,000 marines), 7,500-person Air Force, for a total just under 145,000.⁴⁵

Of those in uniform, "less than a quarter, some 30,000 men were professional volunteers. Of these, some 20,000 were being used in actual counterinsurgency operations. The result was that the force in the field was not only grossly inadequate but was deployed in such a fashion as to ensure defeat. This was precisely what happened during the 1996-98 period."⁴⁶ As mentioned above, Colombian law exempts anyone with a high-school education from serving in combat units. The large contingent of these *bachilleres* had an undermining affect on the Colombian military (COLMIL) and Colombian National Police (CNP), as the class system was counterproductive to forming force cohesion. Requirements to guard over 5,000 critical infrastructural points (electrical, roads, communications, oil and gas pipelines and outposts), plus patrol 18,000 kilometers of roads and rivers, perhaps half of the Army –maybe less—were available to combat the IAGs. As evidence of the lack of presence, "6,242 *corregimientos* [districts] needed military presence, but only 980 had it, while AUC, FARC, and ELN were present in some 5,300 districts."⁴⁷ Conventional wisdom states that an effective counterinsurgency campaign requires a minimum of a 10:1 ratio, before accounting for extenuating variables

⁴⁴ Adrian English, "The Colombian Armed Forces – An Update," *Jane's Data Research* (Jane's Intelligence Review, September 1, 1995, vol. 007, issue 009), p. 424.

⁴⁵ Nina M. Serafino, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Thomas Marks, "Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency," p. 10.

⁴⁷ Gabriel Marcella, *The United States and Colombia: The Journey From Ambiguity to Strategic Clarity* (Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, and North-South Center of the University of Miami, ISBN 1-58487-125-3) p. 10.

such as terrain, equipment disparity, and legal constraints.⁴⁸ Counting only the FARC (15-18,000) and ELN (5-6,000) combatants, the actual ratio facing the military was closer to 1:1.

In a time of CNP and COLMIL crisis, their rivalry and distrust fortified a parochial intelligence culture. Stovepiped security agencies refused to share information. Federal laws reinforced the line between the CNP's counterdrug mission and the COLMIL's counterinsurgency war. Utilization of intelligence was ineffective even within the COLMIL itself. Information was provided after the fact, or operators required verification of reports which came after opportunities had past. In January 1999, General Charles Wilhelm, Commander, U.S. Southern Command, observed shortcomings as "mobility, intelligence collection capabilities, direct attack capabilities and certain aspects of command and control. This is a mobility issue to a large extent, or how to effectively confront the traffickers and insurgents."⁴⁹ His assessment for improving the underlying mobility issue was to add attack helicopters, overhaul their riverine capabilities, while simultaneously improving command and control, intelligence analysis, production and dissemination.

Colombia's financial investment in its military has historically been among the lowest of any nation involved in internal security threats, as illustrated in Figure 3.2. Its average annual defense spending in the 1990s was a mere 1.35 percent of gross national product (GDP), and rose to only 1.89 percent in 2000. Colombian defense budget numbers include the National Police figures as well, which combined equated to US\$3.256 billion or 3.5 percent of GDP in 2001.

⁴⁸ Brook Larmer and Steven Ambrus, "The Tears of a Nation," *Newsweek*, (International ed., New York, June 22, 1998), pp. 22-24.

⁴⁹ Bryan Bender, "Briefing – Colombia's Internal Security; 2 Fronts, 1 War," *Jane's Data Search* (Jane's Defence Weekly, vol. 031, issue. 004, January 27, 1999) p. 4.

Countries with Few Internal Security Threats / Percent GDP		Countries with Significant Internal Conflict / Percent GDP	
Chile	2.06%	Algeria	3.9 %
Argentina	1.48%	Colombia	1.35%
		Lebanon	3.2 %
		Turkey	4.4 %
		Venezuela	1.38%

Figure 3.2 Defense Spending of the 1990s -- Percentage of GDP
(From Reference: Gabriel Marcella, "United States and Colombia," p. 13)

Colombian Defense Spending (US\$ billions)				
1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
2.2	2.0	3.0	3.26	3.02 (3.9% GDP)

Figure 3.3 Colombia's Defense Spending, 1999-2003
(Includes CNP; actual dollars)
(From Reference: Jane's Online, "South American Defence Markets, pp. 2-3)

2. Strategic Reliance

The modern Colombian-U.S. military relationship began with their participation in the Korean War, and their subsequent Cold War containment-oriented assistance pacts. Small-but-regular levels of military and economic aid have continued throughout the decades. Prior to the late 1980s, most of the Army's tired, obsolete *lend-lease* equipment was obtained from outmoded U.S. stockpiles. Greater assistance may have been forthcoming if not for the United State's experiences in Indochina and Central America in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. The fear of another Vietnam or El Salvador resulted in Congress' erecting an arbitrary firewall between Colombia's counterdrug war and their counterinsurgency war. Strict laws prohibited any participation in the latter. The counterdrug relationship deepened in 1989, when the U.S. military was assigned a significant role in the "Drug War," expanding relational and funding opportunities. The United State's increased focus on counterdrugs efforts coincided with Colombia's increased national insecurity. Figure 3.4 depicts the sudden rise in levels of US aid throughout the 1990s, just as the Colombian Army

entered into its low point, suffering tactical and operational defeats at the hands of the FARC. Adding to Washington's frustration was the nullification of regional successes in Bolivia and Peru's coca production by increases in Colombia's coca production. Finally, amid the growing number of human rights abuse accusations involving government forces the initial presidential decertification decision was made in March 1996.

Fiscal Year (FY) Agency	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000*	2001	2002	2003 [#] (est)	Total
State	\$ 22.6	\$ 44.4	\$ 83.1	\$237.7	\$774.9	\$ 48.0	\$275.4	\$452.0	\$1,550.3
DoD	14.5	53.2	61.4	80.9	128.5	190.2	119.1	149.9	587.7
USAID [^]	0.0	0.0	3.3	6.3	123.5	0.0	104.5	151.0	379.0
Total	37.1	97.6	147.8	324.9	1,026.9	238.2	499.0	752.9	3,124.4
* Includes funds appropriated for Plan Colombia through the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act, FY00, for \$330M (Division B of P.L.106-246). # Includes \$93M in Foreign Military Financing funds appropriated in the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Appropriations Act, 2003 (Division E, Title III of P.L.108-7); \$34M appropriated to State and \$34M appropriated to Defense in the Supplemental Appropriations Act to Support Department of Defense Operations in Iraq for FY03 (P.L.108-11); and \$37.1M for Foreign Military Financing allotted from FY03 supplemental appropriations. ^ In FY00-03, State transferred \$375M to USAID for alternative development, judicial sector reform, and internally displaced persons programs.									

Figure 3.4 U.S. Aid to Colombia from 1996 to 2003
(From Reference: Henry L. Hinton, pp.5-6)

According to a U.S. General Accounting Office testimony, this resulted in the cancellation or delay of approximately \$35 million in U.S. counternarcotics assistance of a \$75.5 million over the two year decertification. "The Foreign Military Sales and State assistance was released in October 1996, but the foreign Military Financing grant aid and some military training were frozen until August 1997, when the President released it as part of a national security waiver."⁵⁰ The military took the largest hit as their units were accused of participating in or allowing the human rights abuses. Of the \$35 million, the COLMIL lost almost \$30 million in Foreign Military Financing grant money, used to purchase helicopter spare parts, ammunition, explosives, and the like. The loss of another \$1.4 million earmarked for education and training affected both

⁵⁰ Henry L. Hinton, "Drug Control: Counternarcotics Efforts in Colombia Face Continuing Challenges," *United States General Accounting Office* (Testimony Before the Committee on International Relations House of Representatives, February 26, 1998, GAO/T-NSIAD-98-103), pp.5-6.

the police and military. Approximately \$3.6 million was lost in U.S. Foreign Military Sales Program of equipment to both the military and police.

The U.S. administration re-certified Colombia's military in the 1998 certification process, and reinstated normal funding sources. In light of the growing crisis in 1999, the U.S. Congress voted a \$165 million supplemental aid package that was added to the previously authorized \$124 million.⁵¹ However, Congress attached significant strings to its appropriation funding. The money was to be used for CD missions only. COLMIL forces were to create a pilot counterdrug battalion, comprised only of human rights-vetted soldiers, which equated to Colombia dedicating their best performers—the ones certain to pass the vetting process—to fight in the CD portion of a much larger counterinsurgency war. Fiscal law and Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 73 prohibited the use of any intelligence and military assets against the left or rightwing groups. So narrow, in fact, that if intelligence collected by U.S. assets detected a major FARC movement against the COLMIL, the information could not be shared. Given the requirements levied upon the COLMIL and the limited support provided in return, it is understandable why the COLMIL become disillusioned by our level of support. Nonetheless, General Tapias returned to General Wilhelm and accepted the terms to create the first CD Battalion. Despite the shortcomings, the psychological and moral boost was as valuable U.S. a contribution as the funding.

C. MILITARY CHANGE UNDER PASTRANA (1998-2002)

Prior to 1998, the military adaptations to the changing threat had fallen far behind those made by their adversaries. President Pastrana's fundamental election platform was to bring about a peaceful settlement with the guerrilla groups and he is often overlooked for the prerequisite role he played in his tireless pursuit of peace. While pursuing a peace agreement, he: a) appointed progressive generals to top positions; and b) successfully developed and marketed Plan Colombia to U.S. policy makers, thereby capitalizing on an

⁵¹ Gabriel Marcella, *United States and Colombia*, p. 33.

opportunity for international support for military assistance and aid for socio-economic reform. This section describes how the critical organizational changes of 1998 to 2002, were adaptive rather than transformational.

1. Executive -- Plan Colombia

Plan Colombia was an essential prerequisite for subsequent military transformation, but it should not be construed as causing transformation, nor was it intended for that purpose. From the Colombian perspective, it was designed as a comprehensive 5-year strategy that emphasized the nation's economic revitalization and social restoration. From an U.S. perspective, it was a means to assist Colombians prosecute the counterdrug (CD) at its source, before arriving in the United States. It was principally the brainchild of one of Dr. Jaime Ruiz, senior advisor to President Pastrana. Funding for this comprehensive program called for burden sharing between producing and consuming nations. Colombia was to invest US\$4 billion, while the United States and the European nations would fund the US\$3.5 billion balance (US\$1.3 billion and US\$2.2 billion, respectfully).⁵² Pastrana's plan called for Colombia to accept the lion's share of fiscal responsibility of US\$4 billion. However, the proposed figures and those actually paid are quite different. Due to economic recession and a budget deficit, Colombia has been unable to allocate even close to the amount envisioned. Unlike previous efforts that narrowly focused on military issues, Plan Colombia tackles issues previously addressed independently or ignored altogether. Of U.S. aid, human rights and judicial reform garnered US\$122 million, and another US\$174 million went to alternative economic development measures in Colombia, Bolivia and Ecuador. The police received US\$115.6 million and counternarcotics operations (including humanitarian assistance, helicopters, and development assistance), brought in US\$390.5 million.^{53, 54} Of Colombia's entire

⁵² Apart from the United States, international support has amounted to only US\$550-600 million as of 2002, from the European Union, the United Nations, Spain, Japan, Canada, United Kingdom, Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland. Ibid., p. 41.

⁵³ General Accounting Office (GAO) Report, *Drug Control: Specific Performance Measures and Long-Term Costs for U.S. Programs in Colombia Have Not Been Developed*, (Reported to Congressional Committees on June 2003, GAO-03-783), pp. 8-9.

US\$7.5 billion program, the military portion equated to only 7 percent.⁵⁵ The broad-brush elements of the Plan called for the following measures to be taken: 1) promote rural alternative agricultural and economic programs, plus other rural development projects; 2) improve health care, education and social services for Colombians

2. Armed Forces Corrections

In August 1998, Colombia's armed forces fully realized their predicament and the need to regain the initiative. General Fernando "Tapias" Stahelin assumed the Commanding General position on the heels of U.S. decertification and conditional support. Recognizing the moral value of domestic and international opinion, he turned his efforts to eliminating human rights violations and severing any AUC ties with the COLMIL. Respect for human rights was emphasized in training and operations, and a zero tolerance policy for violations was invoked. The COLAR is disproportionately responsible for conducting the counterinsurgency war, and the focus of alleged human rights violations. Commanding the Army was another progressive general, Jorge Enrique "Mora" Rangel. Backed by President Pastrana, these commanders were able to initiate the first steps towards recovery and change. Both Tapias and Mora had commanded the elite mobile brigades (BRIM), and both were essential to the pending reorganization.

Beginning in 1998, military leaders had begun a painful restructuring. They nearly doubled the number of helicopters, created a 4,000-strong rapid reaction force, and retrofitted five old turboprop planes with heavy machine guns and infrared radar for night operations. They also gave soldiers a pay hike, hoping to reduce their dependence on young draftees and giving experienced soldiers a reason to stay longer.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ General Accounting Office (GAO) Report, *Drug Control: U.S. Assistance to Colombia Will Take Years to Produce Results* (Report to the Chairman and Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives on October 2000, GAO-01-26), pp. 7-8.

⁵⁵ Gabriel Marcella, *United States and Colombia*, p. 40.

⁵⁶ Dana Priest, p. 211.

Generals Tapias and Mora initiated a program to replace conscripts with professional soldiers, reorganize the Army, and restructure the intelligence service. *Plan 10,000* took aim at replacing all conscripts with professional forces at a rate of 10,000 per year, for each the CNP and COLMIL. The Army reorganized away from the U.S. doctrinal model (1=Personnel; 2=Intelligence; 3=Operations; 4=Logistics) to one more relevant to Colombia's war. To reflect a need for greater planning and integration, the *Operations* directorate was led by a major general, *Intelligence* by a brigadier general, and *Psychological Operations* by a colonel.⁵⁷ Further, centralized control was deemed more efficient and appropriate for countering the FARC's new mobilized form of warfare. Rather than parcel critical assets to lower levels, the management and authorization of helicopters and Special Forces was retained by the Commanding General. Organization was not the only change however. Shortly after taking command, General Mora required a pledge from each senior officer that their forces would be combat-ready within 3 months of his assumption of command. Those who failed to deliver were replaced.

Marked improvement was noticeable by mid-1999. On December 9, 1999, the elite Mobile Brigades (BRIM) and the Special Forces Brigade became the core of newly created rapid-reaction force, the *Fuerza de Despliegue Rapido* (FUDRA) battalion. Pastrana's plan increased the number of U.S. helicopters from 18 helicopters in 1998, to 172 by the end of his term in 2002.⁵⁸ The enhanced force provided speed and flexibility, but were restricted to direct counterdrug missions alone; not available to combat Colombia's counterinsurgency war. Army forces extended their ability of supporting anti-narcotics battalions and special Riverine brigades through the delivery of reinforcements, out-maneuvering the enemy, and employing air-to-ground fire. "Gone are the problems of moving support troops...The mission will be to hit strategic targets with all the force that these types of action demand," said

⁵⁷ Thomas Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency*, p. 14.

⁵⁸ Gabriel Marcella, *United States and Colombia*, p. 44.

President Pastrana.⁵⁹ However, the COLAR's inability to secure forward basing locations and aircraft range limitations prevented the new assets' ability to affect the whole of Colombian territory.

The traditional obstacles to rapid mobility are two North-South mountain ranges that split the country effectively into three parts. The first new high mountain brigade was created to challenge the FARC along these strategic corridors utilized to smuggle arms, drugs, kidnap victims, and avoid COLAR pursuit. Once denied these mobility corridors, pressure could be applied on their safe havens and training bases. These forces combined infantry, armor, engineers and artillery, capable of waging effective combat for five days without re-supply; common do to poor mountain weather conditions. The increased capability of the Blackhawk over the UH-1N and Huey II helicopters enabled forces to *search and destroy* in the high Andes Mountains. In 2001, the first battalion (Sumapaz Battalion) became operational, based near Bogotá in the Sumapaz mountain range.⁶⁰

Intelligence groups underwent their own changes. The Army's central intelligence gathering unit, the 20th Intelligence Brigade, was completely disbanded due to human rights violations just prior to his taking office. To avoid future abuses, Pastrana directed the formation of a new body, the Military Intelligence Center (CIME). Stripped of any operational mission, they were instead assigned a support role: receive, process, and provide intelligence to the users. Modernization efforts included technological intelligence gathering improvements. The Joint Intelligence Center (JIC), located in Tres Esquinas, was specifically created for, and legally restricted to, the counterdrug effort. Its members fuse (process, analyze and disseminate) signals intelligence, such as communications intercepts along with imagery from U.S. reconnaissance planes and satellites. The focal position of Director of Army Intelligence was created to

⁵⁹ *Jane's Data Search*, "South American Defence Markets – February 01, 2000," [Online](Posted: June 21, 2000, available from: <http://www2.janes.com/K2/results.jsp>, accessed 2 August 2004), p. 1.

⁶⁰ *Jane's World Armies*, "World Armies, Colombia," (date posted: February 9, 2004, available from: http://jwar.janes.com/docs/jwar/search_results.jsp?, accessed 26 May 2004), pp. 1-3.

consolidate Army intelligence, but also report to the National Council for Intelligence, headed by Minister of Defense and the Commanding General of Military Forces. Changes such as these continued throughout the Ministry of Defense (MOD), working to improve effectiveness and restore confidence. Between his inauguration and March 2001, Pastrana purged over 12,000 police officers due to allegations of corruption.⁶¹

Unfortunately, Pastrana's obsession with the elusive peace process denied Colombian of a unifying national strategy. Lacking executive-level leadership, or significant increase in resources, senior military officers repeated the cycle of employing incremental adaptations in response to the FARC. Planned development of new rapid deployment forces and regaining lost territory was conservatively planned without a sense of urgency proportional to the crisis. Government representatives courted FARC demands for resuming talks, granted *despeje* extensions, and fruitlessly endured month-long delays at the peace table. Meanwhile, the FARC continued attacks, executions and Congressional kidnappings unabated. The defense's frustration came to a boil in May 1999, when Defence Minister Rodrigo Lloreda Caicedo resigned over what he felt was desperate attempts to secure a settlement at the cost of Colombia's security. Fifty other high-ranking officers followed in submitting their resignations, including eighteen generals, but Pastrana rejected all other resignations. Only the Defence Minister was replaced with Luis Fernando Ramirez Acuna.

The failed peace process will likely be his most memorable legacy of all. However, in the minds of Colombians and the international community, President Pastrana revealed the FARC's true insincerity by his carrying the olive branch far beyond the point of any doubt. The result served to rally support for President Uribe and both isolated and de-legitimized the FARC.

⁶¹ Anthony Forster, "The President and His Plan," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (March 1, 2001; date posted: March 1, 2001), p. 1.

D. MILITARY TRANSFORMATION UNDER URIBE (2002-PRESENT)

Legitimized by the full support of most Colombians and international community, President Uribe entered office promising to establish “democratic authority.” Immediately, he declared a “state of commotion,” permitting his assumption of emergency powers. In effect, he was also declaring war on the COLMIL’s *business-as-usual* demeanor. This section describes how Uribe continues to lead his security forces from the period of adaptation to true and convincing transformation.

By August 2002, the COLMIL had identified many IBRDF concepts, and were gradually bringing them on line (refer to section “Armed Force Adjustments” above). President Uribe supported such initiatives as Fuerza de Despliegue Rapido (FUDRA), High Mountain Battalions, intelligence fusion, and Plan 10,000, but rejected the associated timetables. However, in addition to accelerating their operational readiness dates, he increased the eventual total numbers to be produced.

In May 2003, the second FUDRA battalion came on line (General Santos Gutierrez Prieto Battalion) to engage guerrillas in the corridor connecting the center of the nation with the eastern portion from its location in El Espino, Boyacá. Also in May 2003, the Rodrigo Lloreda Caicedo Battalion was placed near Cali, in the Los Farallones Mountains. By mid-February 2004, three of six battalions were operational and effectively closing down FARC and ELN logistics lines.⁶² Fourth, fifth and sixth battalions will be located in Santiago (Cauca Department), Génova (Quindío), and near the Caribbean Coast (Magdalena), respectively.⁶³

⁶² “World Armies, Colombia,” *Jane’s World Armies* (date posted: February 9, 2004, http://jwar.janes.com/docs/jwar/search_results.jsp?, last viewed May 26, 2004), pp. 1-3.

⁶³ “World Armies, Colombia,” *Jane’s World Armies* (date posted: August 17, 2004, http://jwar.janes.com/docs/jwar/search_results.jsp?, last viewed Aug 26, 2004), pp. 1-2.

Forces (# of troops)	Jul 00	Jul 02	'00-'02 Incr.	Jun 04	'02-'04 Incr.	4-Year Incr.
Army	121,000	154,339	27.6%	187,788	21.7%	55.2%
Navy	18,000	19,548	8.6%	23,200	18.7%	28.9%
Air Force	7,300	7,527	3.1%	8,311	10.4%	13.9%
Military Forces	146,300	181,414	24.0%	219,299	20.9%	49.9%
Police	105,000*	97,382	-7.3%	114,421	17.5%	9.0%
Total Uniformed	251,300	278,796	10.9%	333,720	19.7%	32.8%
Civilian Personnel (unavailable)		19,029	---	18,416	-3.2%	---
Total Personnel	----	297,825	---	352,136	18.2%	---

Figure 3.5 Force Increases; 2002-2004
(From Reference: Dra. Maria del Pilar Hurtado A., p. 1.)

Elite Units (totals)	2002	2003	2004 (projected)	Subtotal (2004)	2005 (projected)	2006 (projected)	Total
High Mountain Battalions	1	3	2	6	1	1	8
Mobile Brigades (BRIM)	7	2	3	12	3	3	18
Urban Antiterrorist Special Forces Units (AFEATUR)	1	12	1	14	---	---	14
Carabineros	---	10,000	5,000	15,000	---	---	15,000
Auxiliary Regular Police	1,800	8,200	4,000	14,000	---	---	14,000

Figure 3.6 Elite Unit Increases; 2002-2004
(From Reference: Dra. Maria del Pilar Hurtado A., p. 9.)

To fund the significant defense budget increase, Uribe capitalized on three factors to fuel the significantly larger IBRDF structure costs. First, his election victory was correctly perceived as a mandate from the people. As an independent candidate he enjoyed no official party support, but won by an unprecedented margin, and Congress would not dare oppose him in light of national approval. He initiated a one-time war tax of 1.2 percent for citizens who possessed over US\$65,000 in liquid assets. The roughly 400,000 people who qualified contributed approximately US\$ 1 billion.⁶⁴ He has since led the effort to increase the Ministry of Defense budget from 2.4 percent of gross domestic

⁶⁴ Bryan Bender, "Narco-Terrorism in Colombia – Visible Cracks," *Jane's Defense Weekly* (July 9, 2003, posted: July 2, 2003, available from: <http://www2.janes.com/K2/results.jsp>, accessed 3 September 2004), p. 2.

product (US\$ 3.0 billion) in 2001, to 3.9 percent (US\$ 3.02 billion) in 2003.⁶⁵ By leading the tax restructuring effort, he intends to establish the eventual 5.5% by 2006, which will remain in effect for as long as the conflict continues. Second, with Congress' awareness of events surrounding the FARC (failed peace process and municipal attacks), it is speculated, that recent COLMIL trends of success were deemed worthy of their support. Ending the war was a national priority and the favorable operational results of units such as the FUDRA and High Mountain battalions combined to motivate greater congressional support. Finally, in light of the United States' War on Terror, Uribe found a willing partner in Colombia's effort to combat narcoterrorists. Commitments for Colombian aid was raised another 50 percent from 2002 to 2003 (see Figure 3.4). These three factors combined to fuel the transformation process.

Critical to the intelligence portion of the IBRDF, U.S. expanded its support continued through National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 18, titled, "Military Assistance to Colombia" (November 2002), and Expanded Authority, which came in 2003, thereby removing the firewall between the CD funds and counterterrorism (CT) funds. "Operations today are more efficient and effective because our expanded authorities allow the same assets to be used to confront the common enemy found at the nexus between drugs and terror...Expanded Authority from Congress is essential to this [U.S. Southern] command's ability to deal with narcoterrorists."⁶⁶ Greatly expanded intelligence is fused at the CIME, and pushed out to the operators, permitting rapid, decisive action. In addition to providing raw intelligence, U.S. advisors are attempting to train the headquarters' staff and battalion leadership to expand information sharing and shorten the response time once provided.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – South America*, "Defense Spending, Colombia," (date posted: July 9, 2004 and June 24, 2002, available from: <http://www2.janes.com/K2/results.jsp>, accessed 14 August 2004).

⁶⁶ James T. Hill, Testimony before House Armed Services Committee (March 24, 2004, available at: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/2004_hr/04-03-24hill.htm, last viewed: September 8, 2004), p. 14.

⁶⁷ Kim Burger, "US Special Forces Give Colombians Anti-Terrorism Training," *Jane's Defense Weekly* (January 8, 2003; date posted: December 18, 2002, available at: <http://www2.janes.com/K2/results.jsp>, accessed 17 July 2004).

President Uribe's hard-line policy included a decapitation strategy; track, target and capture or kill guerrilla leaders. Once these leaders are identified, direct action is taken against them. In the first half of 2004 alone, 27 leaders were killed along with additional lieutenants and militias, in 850 combat encounters.⁶⁸ In order to gain the necessary intelligence, he launched his idea of a 'million-man militia' on his first day as president. This network of civilian informants were designed to augment the CNP and provide human intelligence (HUMINT) to security forces. Next, a commando unit, created in 2003 and modeled after the U.S. Army Ranger battalion, was designed to utilize both low-tech HUMINT and high-tech assets to conduct long-range tactical level reconnaissance and surveillance, specifically seeking out terrorist group leaders.⁶⁹ Three Counter-Insurgency (COIN) formations, designated as *Brigadas de Infantería Contraguerrilla*, were also formed and assigned individually to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Divisions, together with seven additional battalions of military police.⁷⁰

Protecting infrastructure remains essential to Colombia's economic well-being, so the generals re-evaluated the true critical nodes, but rather than return to ineffective static outposts, two additional units were transformed into a quick reaction force designed to protect oil pipelines, electric pylons, and communications relays, in Northeast Colombia. The 18th and 5th Brigades (BDE) each comprised of approximately four 500-person battalions, or 4,000 soldiers total.⁷¹ Until recently, petroleum companies and state officials either endured the lost revenue and massive environmental clean up from frequent attacks or paid extortion fees to terrorists to prevent such attacks; totaling US\$450 in lost revenues in 2001. Like other newly created units, the transformational aspect

⁶⁸ Ejército Nacional, *Operational Balance of the First Semester 2004*, (June 30, 2004, available from: <http://www.ejercito.mil.co/ingles/detalleInforme.asp?numDocumento=7628>, accessed 22 August 2004).

⁶⁹ Gabriel Marcella, *United States and Colombia*, p. 57.

⁷⁰ *Jane's World Armies*, "Army Organization – Colombia," (August 17, 2004, available from: <http://www2.janes.com/K2/results.jsp>, accessed 12 September 2004).

⁷¹ Galen Jackman, *Media Roundtable with U.S. Southern Command J-3 (Operations) Chief*, Center for International Policy—Colombia Program (October 4, 2002, available from: <http://ciponline.org/colombia/02100401.htm>; accessed 16 August 2004), p. 4.

involves taking existing forces, completely re-tooling their capabilities and order of battle to create of culture of success—it is the union of new mission concept and increased capability. U.S. policy officials forecasted investing US\$203 million for 2003 and 2004 to train and equip elite troops, aviation (helicopter and C-130 aircraft) assets, and sustain the associated infrastructure security programs.⁷² At the time of this writing, the 18 BDE completed its one-year training, and the 5 BDE is being trained, with plans to also train National Police for this role.⁷³

Finally, the defense forces have initiated plans to counter the increasing cost associated with the IBRDF infrastructure. Helicopter operations are among the most expensive budget items, but currently, each service is responsible for conducting their own maintenance. To gain cost advantages, all depot maintenance will be consolidated under the Air Force, including the CNP assets. Additionally, the U.S. and Colombian governments are working together to accelerate *train-the-trainer* programs. In so doing, Colombians can reduce their reliance on U.S. schoolhouse pipelines and contractor support, and more appropriately manage their force requirements by possessing organic, in-house instruction.⁷⁴

⁷² Gabriel Marcella, *United States and Colombia*; p. 55.

⁷³ Galen Jackman, p. 7.

⁷⁴ Frances Tilney, telephone interview conducted by author on August 5, 2004. (Western Hemisphere Affairs, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington D.C.).

IV. EVALUATION OF COLOMBIAN SECURITY FORCE TRANSFORMATION

Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced. ⁷⁵

James Arthur Baldwin
(1924-87)

*Our main objective is to help transform the Colombian military to a force that is capable of defeating the terrorist organizations, establishing presence and defense, in order to provide a safe and secure environment and governance throughout Colombia.*⁷⁶

BG Galen B. Jackman, USA
Director of Operations (J3), U.S. Southern Command
December 18, 2002

In a remarkably short period, Colombia's security forces transformed from a defensive, urban-fortified force into a highly mobile, offensive force. This chapter evaluates three aspects of their transformational process. First, what measures of effectiveness support the claim of true Colombian transformation? Second, what shortcomings remain and how will they affect the desired process? Finally, what are the prospects of consolidating change in the long-term?

The first segment reflects the positive impact of transformation on operations, security and force strength. However, the second portion of the chapter discloses four major obstacles threatening to derail continued progress: parochial culture; IBRDF resistance; intelligence failings; and corruption. The third section reveals that Colombia's current progress toward institutionalizing change remains uncertain beyond President Uribe's tenure.

⁷⁵ QuoteWorld.org (available from: <http://www.quoteworld.org/author.php?thetext=James+Arthur+Baldwin+%281924-87%29>; Internet; accessed: September 8, 2004).

⁷⁶ Kim Burger, "U.S. Special Forces Give Colombians Anti-Terrorism Training," *Jane's Defense Weekly* (January 8, 2003, date posted: 18 December 2003, available from: <http://www4.janes.com/>; Internet; accessed 21 August 2004), p. 1.

A. EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TRANSFORMATIONAL FORCES

As late as 1998, Colombia's security forces endured battalion-size defeats. In the time since, the nation has undergone two distinct improvement phases, coinciding to the with the administrations of Presidents Andrés Pastrana and Álvaro Uribe, respectively. The years from 1998 to 2002, coined the preamble phase, benefited from visionary changes in organizational structure led principally by Army Generals Tapias (Armed Forces Commander General) and Mora (Commanding General of the Army). While these years provided directional correction, it was 2002-to-present, that propelled the security forces into true transformation.

Evidence of the combined success of both phases is found in numerous indicators, including: 1) operational results; 2) trends in civilian security; and 3) impact on the IAGs' ability to operate. Operational results provide convincing trend data of the defense force's ascension beyond mere modernization. Similarly, the impact on civil society has greatly improved as a direct result of the sustained presence of the CNP, the COLMIL's ability to apply increasing pressure on IAGs. Finally, the IAGs are exhibiting signs of stress, indicated by a decrease in initiated operations, choosing civilian *soft* targets and increased demobilization.

Preamble. Under President Pastrana's watch, Generals Tapias and Mora stopped the hemorrhaging, and mandated initial steps toward reconstruction. These changes should not be considered transformational, but rather the predictable military response of adapting to an increasing FARC threat. Positive signs were evident within one year of Tapias and Mora's implementation of structural change. In July and again in November-December of 1999, government forces successfully thwarted two large-scale FARC offenses. It is important to note that this period of time does not mark a clear indication of the war's final outcome, but the latest shift in momentum that has repeatedly ebbed and flowed.

As part of Operation GATO NEGRO, the COLMIL launched an offensive near Barrancominas, in the Vichada department of eastern Colombia, in the heart of the FARC's interests. The area had served as a major staging base for attacks and was used to produce and process large amounts of coca. It was also valuable in providing a mobility corridor for drug shipments to Venezuela and Brazil. Approximately 3,000 FUDRA members descended on the area and captured 60 cocaine laboratories, 22 airstrips, 16 rebel camps, and 50,000 acres of newly discovered coca plantations. Also rounded up was the FARC's largest foreign trading partner and Brazil's top drug dealer, Luis Fernando da Costa. His network provided US\$10 million in drugs-for-arm trade every month.⁷⁷

During *Operation 7 de Agosto* (2001), 1,300 FARC members were deterred from attacking locations in the South and East. The operation also resulted in the capture of large quantities of arms, supplies and 17 FARC camps, and the body of a leading guerrilla commander, Urías Cuellar. Over the same year, government forces launched major operations against AUC forces as well, killing 116, capturing 992, and seizing arms, equipment and financial records.⁷⁸ By December 2001, the combined efforts of the National Police's Dirección Antinarcóticos (Anti-Narcotics Directorate, DIRAN) and military forces also destroyed "61 cocaine hydrochloride (HCL) labs, 330 cocaine base labs, 5 heroin and 9 other drug or precursor chemical processing facilities; had put 54 clandestine airstrips out of service; and had sized or destroyed almost 30 metric tons of cocaine HCL, base cocaine and basuco (low-grade cocaine byproduct)."⁷⁹

U.S. aid was little more than psychological until November 2002 (NSPD 18), in the counterterrorist war. Until then, the conditional requirements actually drew many of their best forces away from fighting the FARC, and joined them

⁷⁷ Gabriel Marcella, *The United States and Colombia*, p. 26.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 44-45.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 47.

with U.S. assets which were limited on the counterdrug mission. The war had effectively returned to the stalemate conditions that had dominated the past 40 years.

Transformational. By exhausting all attempts at a peace settlement, President Pastrana laid the necessary foundation for his successor by uniting most of the nation against the FARC. Upon Uribe's inauguration, much of the preparatory steps were under way; the forces were growing larger, better led and equipped. Similarly, training and organizational changes had improved, but they did not significantly challenge traditional norms, nor did they permeate throughout the force structure. In other words, the response was measured rather than revolutionary. Organizationally, the COLMIL was unwilling or unable to eliminate inefficiencies in the cultural status quo, which closely adhered to "cultural personalism." This term refers to the practice of expanding one's direct influence over others so as to accumulate indebted followers, thereby increasing one's power. One sees it displayed by the practice of disproportionately high-level leaders taking direct part in approving awards, authorizing assignments, and the like. In relative terms, the practice of delegating such authority equates to willfully weakening ones self and strengthening a subordinate officer. The result is a huge disincentive to cooperate, even among your own military service. This phenomenon is not unique to the security community, as many of Colombia's prominent leaders also adhere to this culture.

Uribe's unprecedented expectations of his military leaders ignited the second stage of change, and in so doing, initiated the COLMIL's transformation process. In exchange for demanding superior performance from his commanders and troops, he pledged his support and leadership in unifying Colombia's strategic vision.

1. Operational Results

An obvious indicator of COLMIL success is their win-loss record. The military's last significant defeat occurred in October 2000, and even then it was the result of COLMIL errors rather than FARC successes. Reinforcements were shot down as they attempted a daylight ingress. The COLMIL has taken the

initiative and forced the FARC back to *below-the-horizon* warfare--denying them the ability to engage in mobilized warfare.⁸⁰ One clear indicator of the offensive stance taken by the military is the dramatic increase in the number of tactical operations carried out against the IAGs. The 4,523 missions in 2002, increased to 10,730 missions in 2003, or a 237 percent increase. The COLMIL quantified their improvement as a 32 percent increase in overall effectiveness, measured by successful operations and captured assets in January-February 2004, as compared to the same period in 2003.⁸¹

Contrasting two 24-month periods (August '00-July '02 and August '02-July '04) as illustrated in Figure 4.1, the counterterrorist operations netted a 205 percent increase in guerrillas captured and 60 percent more casualties. Of particular interest are the analogous AUC figures, which reflect steeper improvement curves at 258 percent and 206 percent respectively. Yet raw AUC numbers represent half the guerrillas captured and only 20 percent of guerrilla casualties (see Figure 4.1).⁸² Among the killed and captured were 10 major terrorist leaders; a primary target of the government. The COLAR disarmed and/or destroyed 890 explosive devices, 115 mined fields, 10 car bombs, 441 gas cylinder bombs, and tons of ammonium nitrate fuel oil, and ANFO and R-1 explosives. The COLAR also seized numerous rifles/shotguns, handguns, machine guns, rocket launchers, grenade launchers, mortars, hand grenades, and ammunition.⁸³

Assessing results against all IAGs in a single year, Figure 4.2 illustrates a slightly different perspective of Colombia's current performance. Of particular note are the 80 percent increase in total IAG captured and 73 percent increase in voluntarily demobilization. Attacks on all infrastructural targets declined with the exception of oil pipeline attacks. However, another source comparing two 18-

⁸⁰ Thomas Marks, "Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency," pp. 16-17.

⁸¹ Ejercito Nacional, Republica de Colombia, *2004 Balance* (August 2004, available from: <http://www.ejercito.mil.co/ingles/balanceOperacional2004.asp>, accessed 13 August 2004).

⁸² Robert L. Hannan, Colombia Progress Info Sheet (US Southern Command, April 1, 2004).

⁸³ Ibid.

month periods (November 00-July 02 and August 02-April 04) reflected a 37 percent decline in oil pipeline attacks, dropping from 352 to 223.⁸⁴ The positive trends extend to the neutralization of 2,259 terrorists (including 468 KIA), in 319 clashes during January and February 2004. Of the KIA, 246 were FARC members, 101 ELN, and 112 AUC, plus 9 others.⁸⁵ The Colombian Ministry of Defense annual running figures (January through August 2004), reported 1,321 IAG members killed (735 FARC; 253 ELN; 23 other; and 310 AUC), 2,000 captured (1,141; 236; 21; and 602 respectively), and 496 deserters (253; 60; 18; and 165 respectively).⁸⁶

Results of Terrorist Crimes Against the Public			
	<u>Aug '00-Jul '02</u>	<u>Aug '02-Jul '04</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Paramilitaries (AUC)			
Captured	1,839	6,589	+ 258.3%
Casualties (WIA/KIA)	252	773	+ 206.7%
Demobilized/Deserters *	-	1,257	---
Firearms Seized	1,540	5,803	+ 276.8%
Guerrillas (FARC/ELN)			
Captured	4,247	12,977	+ 205.6%
Casualties (WIA/KIA)	2,390	3,841	+ 60.7%
Demobilized/Deserters	-	3,655	---
Firearms Seized	4,633	9,070	+ 95.8%
Drug Traffickers			
Captured	59,261	97,670	+ 64.8%
Casualties (WIA/KIA)	1	9	+ 800.0%
Firearms Seized	885	1,510	+ 70.6%
* Durante el actual periodo Presidencial se han desmovilizado en grupos 1,042 miembros de las AUC, programa que lidera la Oficina del Alto Comisionado para la paz.			

Figure 4.1 Violent Crime Reduction Results -- '02-'03.
(From Reference: Ministerio de Defensa Nacional)

The new mobile police units have also yielded impressive operational results. The specially-trained *carabineros* forces enabled lasting police presence

⁸⁴ Dra. Maria del Pilar Hurtado A., Ministry of National Defense, *Logros y Retos de la Política de Defensa y Seguridad Democrática* (May 10, 2004), p. 36.

⁸⁵ Robert L. Hannan (April 1, 2004).

⁸⁶ Ejercito Nacional, Republica de Colombia, *2004 Balance*.

through the utilization of helicopters as a force multiplier. This combat-equipped, highly mobile light infantry police force was designed to infiltrate battle zones, win decisively and then turn the town back over to the municipal police force in decisive fashion. Upon taking office in August 2002, Uribe's directed the Minister of Defense, Martha Lucia Ramirez, to dramatically accelerate the planned return of CNP to 168 isolated municipalities, from 4-5 years to under 18 months. Despite objections, phase III was successfully completed in January 2004.⁸⁷

Counter Terrorism Results			
Terrorists (FARC, ELN & AUC):	Feb '02-Jan '03	Feb '03-Jan '04	% Change
Captured	5,460	9,839	+ 80%
Casualties (WIA/KIA)	1,872	2,187	+ 17%
Demobilized/Deserters	1,502	2,597	+ 73%
Firearms Seized	4,677	7,046	+ 51%
Grenades Seized	3,908	7,729	+ 98%
Ammunition Seized	569,251	1,528,058	+ 168%
Terrorist Attacks on:			
Electrical lines/Transformers	425	320	- 25%
Communication Towers	57	18	- 68%
Water Pipelines	10	3	- 70%
Towns	24	6	- 75%
Bridges	98	29	- 70%
Roads	261	99	- 62%
Oil Pipelines	59	180	+ 205%
All Attacks	1,635	1,007	- 38%

Figure 4.2 Counterterrorism Results – '02-'03.
(From Reference: Ministry of National Defense, Vice Minister of Institutional Policy)

2. Civilian Security Indicators

One of the most striking measures of transformation is the direct impact on violence and crime rates, resulting from force restructuring and institutional changes. It is essential that government forces triumph in the battle for municipalities in order to reestablish state legitimacy. Colombia's peasants have always represented the largest group of casualties, resulting from indiscriminant

⁸⁷ Dra. Maria del Pilar Hurtado A., p. 20.

targeting, followed by a crescendo of executions by the victors on suspected rival sympathizers. Government forces must break this *assault and cleansing* cycle in order to protect its citizens.

With police presence restored, the combined rapid mobility of military and police *carabineros* forces provide the necessary capability to deploy reinforcements and repel IAG assaults. One such incident occurred on August 23, 2004, when soldiers thwarted the FARC's attempted capture of a bridge in Santa Rosa, a strategic town linking the Putumayo and Huila Departments. Although 13 soldiers were killed, the rapid response of air support and reinforcements denied the guerrillas of their objective.⁸⁸

Overall, the decreases in violent crime statistics associated with IAGs, such as those identified in Figure 4.3, are dramatic. In a single year, massacres were cut nearly in half, 885 fewer people were kidnapped, and more than 5,700 fewer people were murdered in homicides, a rate not seen in over 15 years.⁸⁹

Critics raise concerns over the violence levied by the state in regaining control, and subsequently question the validity of the statistics; reporting that government forces walk the town during the day, but paramilitaries rule some of these so-called liberated towns by night. Further, extrajudicial killings bypass statistical tabulations since paras perform the assassinations in austere locations.⁹⁰ While state figures undoubtedly fail to capture the entire truth-on-the-ground, violence is in clear decline if for no other reason than constraints upon the FARC's ability to wage revenge killings. U.S. Southern Command figures reflect a 13 percent decrease in homicides, 53 percent decline in massacre victims, and 65 percent decline in road block kidnappings for the

⁸⁸ Anonymous, "13 Colombian Soldiers Killed," *SE* (July 23, 2004, available from: http://www.news24.com/News24/World/News/0,,2-10-1462_1562064,00.html, accessed 30 August 2004).

⁸⁹ Ministry of National Defense, Vice Minister of Institutional Policy, *Public Forces Operational Results – Violence and Criminality – Terrorism* (February 10, 2004; available from: http://www.mindefensa.gov.co/fuerza/res_op.xls; accessed 12 August 2004)

⁹⁰ Forrest Hylton, "Comuna 13: Colombia's Urban Battleground," *The Colombia Journal Online* (October 28, 2002, available from: <http://www.colombiajournal.org/colombia137.htm>, accessed 4 September 2004).

period January to May 2004, as compared to the same period in 2003.⁹¹ U.S. State Department officials report that the murder rate in 2003 fell by 20 percent and kidnappings declined by 39 percent, while forced displacements fell nearly in half (49 percent), to the lowest numbers since 1999. Their findings indicate the AUC-involved large-scale massacres and other killings appeared to decline during 2003. While labor leaders and activists continued to be victims of high levels of violence, the number killed sharply declined.⁹² The fact that all numbers are consistently in decline indicates a general decrease in violence. Had only homicides declined while other categories remained largely unchanged, then there would be reason to doubt the numbers.

Violent Crime Reduction Results			
	Feb '02-Jan '03	Feb '03-Jan '04	% Change
Homicides	28,386	22,675	- 20%
Massacre Events	119	71	- 40%
Massacre Victims	700	393	- 44%
Kidnappings	2,972	2,087	- 30%
Illegal Road Blocks	189	71	- 62%
Road Block Kidnappings	706	271	- 62%
Extortion Kidnappings	1,877	1,380	- 27%
Note: The 2003 homicide rate (52 killings/100,000 people) is the lowest rate recorded since 1987.			

Figure 4.3 Violent Crime Reduction Results -- '02-'03.
(From Reference: Ministry of National Defense)

The importance of municipal police presence and increased civilian security cannot be overstated. It signals concern for its citizens, state legitimacy, security and stability. From it flows optimism and opportunity. As the Colombian Ambassador to the United States recently noted:

Today, people and commerce are moving more freely and safely around the country... Improved security has resulted in economic growth. The economy expanded by 4 percent [in 2003], the highest annual rate since 1995. Some 1.2 million jobs were created.

⁹¹ Robert L. Hannan, *Colombia Progress Info Sheet* (U.S. Southern Command, Miami, July 2004, available from: <http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/aidgovt.htm>, accessed 20 September 2004).

⁹² *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – 2003*, Department of State [online] (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, February 25, 2004, available from: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27891.htm>, accessed 20 September 2004)

Following passage of a renewed Andean Trade Preferences Act in 2003, Colombia-US trade grew by 10 percent. GDP growth during the first quarter of this year was 4.1 percent. However, Colombia's transformation is far from complete, as narco-terrorism and poverty still exist.⁹³

3. Impact on Force Strength and Enemy Operations

Another method of gauging COLMIL success is to evaluate the impact on the behavior of the adversary, in particular on the IAGs' ability to recruit and retain members and carry out operations. This hypothesis argues that if the government forces are successfully transforming into a more lethal and professional force, then the FARC, ELN and AUC should be losing members at a rate greater than before transformation occurred. Evidence should point to diminishing numbers, in both the casualties of war and desertions, and/or increased efforts to obtain volunteers or forced recruits. Whether a Maoist organization or not, a group facing recruiting/retention problems will tend to curtail high-risk operations in favor of those with the greatest chances of success for three reasons: 1) preserve a shrinking resource; 2) bolster confidence within the organization; and 3) project to a strong image for consumption by potential recruits. FARC strategy favors targets that combine strategic, operational and tactical value, such as a smuggling corridor co-located with a town. When the prerequisite *overwhelming advantage* is not feasible, a target of lesser value is substituted or no attack made at all. If the FARC assessment is correct, guerrillas will increasingly avoid direct COLMIL contact and instead settle for *softer* (unarmed) targets with achievable tactical gains achieved by overwhelming lightly defended towns, thereby affording troops to re-supplying and forcible recruitment of peasants.

Overall Membership Levels. Current unclassified information offers conflicting information on membership levels. Indicators of the leftwing FARC and ELN point to declining numbers as a result of battle (casualties), capture and demobilization; refer to Figure 4.2. Data supports the assertion that the

⁹³ Luis Alberto Moreno, "After A Dark Period, A Better Colombia," *The Boston Globe* (Boston, August 19, 2004), p. 1.

effectiveness of the IBRDF has raised the FARC's cost of sustaining current ops tempo. While their strategy remains unchanged, it dictates that tactics adjust to the increased government threat by returning below the horizon until they are afforded breathing room to regenerate. This reasoning is compatible with the argument that the COLMIL forces are having a genuine impact on the FARC. However, the guerrillas do not possess the initiative and until the COLMIL allows them to steal it back they are incapable of staging a comeback. In other words, it is currently the COLMIL's game to win or lose, and constant or increasing pressure will prevent this regeneration from occurring. If this opportunity is fumbled however, as in the past, the FARC will once again march toward Bogotá. The strategy of lying low serves two purposes. First, the FARC become more difficult to target, avoiding unwanted pressure and inciting COLMIL frustration. Second, decreased operations at this time maintain group cohesiveness, by not making excessive demands on forces.

The AUC, however, do not reflect a decline in numbers. It remains to be seen if the latest estimate of 20,000 members accurately depicts a present trend or a result of a lag in reporting.⁹⁴ Theoretically, several of the factors contributing to decreasing guerrilla numbers are also applicable to paramilitary members, but the failure of AUC numbers to decrease may indicate a policy failure to sufficiently target paramilitaries and/or an ineffectiveness of IBRDF forces against AUC groups. The paramilitary numbers historically rise and fall inversely proportional to the effectiveness of government troops, without themselves being targeted. As the COLMIL increases security, this trend should continue to lead to increased demobilizations.

Increased Outflow. Within the past two years, the risk of IAG membership has risen substantially, as have the incentives to reintegrate into society. Since President Uribe took office, over 6,000 persons have demobilized, either

⁹⁴ *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – South America*, "Security and Foreign Forces, Colombia," [online] (August 17, 2004, available from: <http://www2.janes.com/K2/k2search.jsp?t=Q>, accessed 12 September 2004)

individually (5,000+) or as a group (AUC Cacique Nutibara Bloque of 1,042).⁹⁵ In the first half of August 2004, 116 IAG members voluntarily turned themselves into state officials, for a total of 1,760 thus far in 2004.⁹⁶ For the purpose of comparison, 3,580 persons voluntarily demobilized in 2003, as compared to 1,412 in 2002.⁹⁷ Former FARC members comprise the largest group, followed by the AUC, and then the ELN. It is worth noting that these desertions equally represent the rural departments. In other words, the causal factors are not specific to any single department or region. Gender and age-specific factors can also be eliminated as the demobilized reflect the estimated populations of each group; of the 116, who demobilized in August 2004, 24 were children and 19 were women or girls.⁹⁸

Changes in two factors likely explain the recent upsurge in defections. First, the stick has gotten much more lethal as a result of the COLMIL's ability to initiate surprise strikes on IAG training camps and supply corridors, or rapidly reinforce government troops to repel IAG assaults. The COLAR reported killing 1,166 terrorist members in the first semester of 2004, and the capture of 4,831 in more than 851 engagements.⁹⁹ The groups once benefiting from the trend 'success breeds success,' must now contend with its antithesis--regular defeat leads to demoralization and eventual defection.

Second, President Uribe's "National Government Reincorporation to Civil Life Program," or Law 128, offers a carrot to deserters by appropriating funds for those who voluntarily abandon their IAGs. The effort to rehabilitate former IAG members back into society is not new, but the level of resources devoted to it is. Program benefits include protection and health care for members and their

⁹⁵ Ejercito Nacional, *Van 5,000 Desmovilizados Individuales en el Gobierno Uribe* (August 20, 2004, available from: <http://www.ejercito.mil.co/index.php?idcategoria=171>; accessed 26 August 2004).

⁹⁶ Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Colombia: A Positive Country* (August 20, 2004, available from: <http://www.presidencia.gov.co/Ingles/news/news.htm>, accessed 30 August 2004).

⁹⁷ Dra. Maria del Pilar Hurtado A., p. 35.

⁹⁸ Anonymous, "Fuerzas Militares de la Republica de Colombia," SNE (available from: <http://www.ejercito.mil.co/ingles/detalleNoticia.asp?numDocumento=8192>; accessed 21 August 2004).

⁹⁹ Ejercito Nacional, *Operational Balance of the First Semester 2004*.

families, as well as economic assistance for the creation of small business, and technical or higher educational opportunities.¹⁰⁰ In the past two years, approximately 80 percent of individuals have turned themselves in to the military or national police, reflecting the successful impact of force professionalization.¹⁰¹ In the past, members rarely defected for fear of death from their own organization, or fear of retribution and torture at the hands of government troops. Those who did so anyway typically sought sanctuary from non-military governmental agencies or the Catholic Church.

In sum, demobilization trends indicate an increasing number of members are willing to take the safety risk because continued membership is becoming more dangerous than demobilization and reintegration. Critics assert that the incentive program is intended as a benefit for AUC members to avoid human rights violation prosecution (or extradition), while the stick is intended to crush the guerrillas. However, evidence supporting this view is less than convincing, as deserters from left-wing groups appear to be taking full advantage of the benefits.

Recruiting Challenges. Colombian officials assert that the recent establishment of a police presence in every municipality has denied the FARC, ELN and AUC of an indentured recruiting pool. While information acquired through debriefing former IAG members is classified, evidence of increased desperation is becoming apparent from other venues, especially among the FARC. An organization that perceives itself as in control and confident typically broadcasts messages of gratitude, successes, and vision for the future. Conversely, an organization under increased external pressure tends to transmit messages of urgency; *join the cause now*. A U.S. Southern Command Policy and Strategy representative pointed to the rhetoric and tone of the FARC's French and Venezuelan websites, which typify the latter. Colombian officials

¹⁰⁰ Ejercito Nacional, *Van 5,000 Desmovilizados Individuales en el Gobierno Uribe*.

¹⁰¹ James T. Hill, p. 5.

report that guerrillas are augmenting their membership drive by the forced recruitment of an average of six to seven members per day.¹⁰²

Change in Enemy Operations. Insurgent operational trends also suggest that the groups are operating under increased pressure, presumably as a result of the Colombian military's recent IBRDF effectiveness. Indications include: 1) their move away from mobility warfare back to guerrilla tactics; 2) a decrease in offensively initiated actions; and 3) the increased targeting of *soft* civilian targets rather than defended police and military targets. These modifications indicate an unwillingness to risk precious assets, especially people, against *legitimate* military or government targets with a higher probability of failure. While these indiscriminate methods of civilian terror show signs of desperation among some of the fronts, it should not be viewed as a last gasp. The FARC remain capable of levying violence against unsuspecting targets, such as the May 2002 mortar attack that landed on a church in northwest Colombia, killing 119 people. On Easter 2003, the FARC paid a boy to deliver a package, and then detonated the bomb when his bicycle was next to a religious procession, killing the boy, 11 priests and injuring many others. They are also suspected of launching the 2003 El Nogal nightclub bombing in Bogotá that claimed 36 lives and wounded 160, and the grenade attacks on two Bogotá bars that wounded 72, including four Americans.¹⁰³ What is the net assessment of current FARC capabilities?

It is important to point out that these figures represent the FARC's calculated response to the COLMIL's increased mobility and lethality, rather than reflecting pending FARC defeat. According to David Spencer, a noted expert in the field, the FARC are predictably adhering to their version of Maoist strategy, under centralized direction. This strategy dictates that groups adapt to changing circumstances and use time to their advantage. Analysts should not misconstrue recent adaptations as abandoning the long-term goal of overthrowing the

¹⁰² Juan Torro, telephone interview conducted by author on August 23, 2004. (LTC, USA, Chief of PolMil Affairs for South America, J-5, U.S. Southern Command, Miami FL).

¹⁰³ Robert Charles, "Colombian Terrorists" *Washington Times* (Washington D.C., August 25, 2004, available from: <http://www.washtimes.com/op-ed/20040824-085849-5667r.htm>, accessed 30 August 2004).

government. Instead, the FARC should be expected to pragmatically evolve and employ realistic operations that promise success.¹⁰⁴ They will prioritize and focus on their most critical strategic, operational and tactical points in order to succeed—those areas that combine key corridors, municipalities and populations centers. If the risk of a large offensive operation is too high, they will forgo that target and redirect efforts elsewhere. While the FARC have adopted a slower operations tempo, revenues continue to accumulate. Several advantages exist in doing so. Operationally and tactically, they avoid unnecessarily engaging a more lethal military force, and stirring a now-capable hornets' nest. Strategically, Uribe cannot remain in office indefinitely, an additional four years is uncertain. Decreased operations and public attention may deflect Uribe support to other socio-economic issues, hence other 2006 presidential candidates. Further, U.S. elections in 2004 may have a diminishing effect on a partisan commitment for the War on Terrorism. If the public's interest is diverted from the counterterrorist effort toward socio-economic issues, congress will likely shift fiscal priorities, in kind. Additionally, Uribe is under increasing international pressure to target the paramilitaries. A decrease in perceived FARC threat may allow for a relative increase in counter-paramilitary pressure.

AUC leaders, such as Miguel Arroyave, (leader of the largest paramilitary group under the AUC umbrella, Centauros Bloc), are aware of this pressure and in response are offering to demobilize in exchange for state guarantees no prosecution, legitimization of their narcotics-generated assets and protection from extradition to the United States. Additional conditions include establishment of safe havens.¹⁰⁵ These self-serving conditions indicate a position of strength. In other words, the top few leaders are not compelled to the peace table from a sense of urgency or crisis as a result of dramatic improvement in police and military IBRDF success. AUC fissures are becoming increasingly evident. In

¹⁰⁴ David Spencer, telephone interview conducted by author on September 3, 2004 (Dr. Spencer is H&AI Director for Combating Terrorism (Hicks & Associates Inc.), SAIC Subsidiary, Washington D.C.).

¹⁰⁵ Juan Forero and Monica Trujillo, "Haven Offered to 2 Militias in Colombia, If They Disarm," *New York Times* (New York, August 3, 2004), p. A.7.

April 2004, Carlos Castaño (AUC spokesman/leader) was ambushed and presumed killed by rival AUC leaders. In early August of the same year, fifteen *paras* were killed when AUC members fought against the smaller Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Casanare (ACC).¹⁰⁶ For the average, low-level *para* member, this is genuine reason for concern as they pay the price of being pawns caught between a slow diplomatic peace process and an urgent need to target rightwing members. While the peace process is expected to drag on, principally due to the United States' insistence on extradition, it is speculated that front-line troops will increasingly risk defection in proportion with the decline of the FARC threat.¹⁰⁷

B. SHORTCOMINGS IN THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

In light of genuine progress, mainstream analysts have upgraded Colombia's future prognosis from *doubtful* to *hopeful*, but a healthy dose of caution is advised in light of four principal shortcomings in the COLMIL's transformation process. The first weakness is their resistance to cooperate across branches of service and with the CNP, forfeiting the benefits of joint operations. Second, a lack of uniform IBRDF concept support is prevalent among mid-to-senior level officers despite the education and operational results. The third weakness exists in the friction of intelligence sharing and responding quickly to time-critical opportunities; again sacrificing probable victories. Finally, internal corruption, especially among the CNP, destroys the reliability of intelligence and force cohesion paramount to IBRDF actions.

1. Parochial versus Joint Culture

First, within the Ministry of Defense the culture of joint-level cooperation is an enormous disappointment. While synergistic examples exist, they are the exception rather than the rule. Without President Uribe's forceful direction, the small amount of progress at the national level would not have occurred. Case-in-

¹⁰⁶ Anonymous, "Colombian Clashes: 15 Dead," SA (July 13, 2004, available from: www.news24.com/News24/World/News/0,,2-10-1462_1556751,00.html, accessed 30 August 2004).

¹⁰⁷ *Jane's World Insurgency And Terrorism* "Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC)," posted: June 1, 2004, available from: <http://www2.janes.com/K2/results.jsp>, accessed 6 September 2004).

point—the national-level *Operation ORION '02* was a joint effort to rid Antioquia's capital, Medellin, from guerrilla domination. President Uribe gave the order for the 1,000-plus person task force (Army, CNP, Air Force and Special Forces as well as members of the intelligence services) to move into Medellín's Comuna 13, a district of 100,000 people with tanks, infantry and helicopters. The state reported the rescue of 30 kidnap victims, conviction of 28 people for their terrorist connections, and the successful liberation of the city by maintaining a 1,500-person military presence until all known guerrilla presence was eradicated and police could maintain order.¹⁰⁸⁻¹⁰⁹

However, while the government promotes the theme of joint cooperation, facts on the ground do not support it. The most severe distrust and rivalry exists between Army and National Police forces. Their mutual contempt has worsened through the decades and the turf battles intensify as a result of possessing overlapping capabilities. Less adversarial is the Air Force and Navy relationship with the National Police, whose capabilities complement each other, and thus some cooperation has occurred. Regional pockets of cooperation are also evident, but generally, the best cooperation so far occurs at the very bottom, where municipal level police and unit commanders only have each other to rely upon. At the lowest levels of security, turf wars are less relevant, and municipal security takes center stage. In light of the established rivalry, one favorable indicator is the increasing regularity with which interagency officials are providing the other agencies *courtesy information* of on-going or pending operations, as a means of avoiding fratricide.¹¹⁰ However, this kind of deconfliction of operations falls far short of the kind of cooperation needed for mobile, intelligence-based forces in both services to act effectively. Progress on this front will require deeper commitments from actors on both side of the police-army divide.

¹⁰⁸ Consulta Outstanding Operations, *Detached Ongoing Operations: ORION Operation* (Comando General de las Fuerzas Militares, July 15, 2003, available from: <http://www.ejercito.mil.co/ingles/detalleInforme.asp?numDocumento-7628>; accessed 22 August 2004).

¹⁰⁹ Forrest Hylton, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Juan Torro, telephone interview.

2. Resistance to IBRDF Concepts

The second red flag relates to a common resistance to IBRDF concepts within the military despite recent evidence of success. According to Brigadier General P.K. Keen, former Military Group Commander, Colombia (2001-2003), the greatest resistance to change is originating from the mid-to-upper grade officer corps; specifically those officers who have not attended a U.S. military staff school. Conversely, their peers who have attended U.S. war colleges, where the doctrinal concepts of intelligence based operations and rapid decisive operations were studied in detail, are among its biggest supporters. Indicative of this resistance, the fledgling concept of delegating authority to non-commissioned officers has caused a split along the same experiential lines. The professional military education (PME) conducted in Colombian has failed to effectively ignite the vision. A clear delineation exists between Colombian educated and *Americanized* officers, and while the trend is improving, they remain many years from embracing the Uribe, Mora and Ospina vision. If, in the meantime, reluctant officers are appointed to key positions of leadership the initiatives will surely die.¹¹¹

Additionally, as a cross-section of Latin American society, the military exhibits a prevalent trait known as "cultural personalism." This is the practice of constantly accumulating influence so as to expand one's following of indebted persons. Retaining direct oversight responsibilities is the means to obtain more power, whereas delegating authority weakens oneself. Thus, it is common for disproportionate level officers signing orders, giving awards, and the like. This produces a large incentive to hoard power rather than cooperate, even among your own military service.¹¹² Joint operations, such as those advocated in an IBRDF force, requires commanders who are willing to forfeit influence in the interest of mission success.

¹¹¹ P.K. Keen, telephone interview conducted by author on September 2, 2004 (BG, USA, former Military Group (MLGRP) Commander—Bogotá, Colombia (2001-2003), Ft Carson).

¹¹² David Spencer, telephone interview.

3. Intelligence Sharing

Third, government forces continue to squander the perishable asset of intelligence due to a failure to share information or operationalize it effectively. Intelligence that American forces would consider *actionable* (reliable and specific enough to warrant action), is often viewed as incomplete to Colombian operators. Whether due to distrust between analysts and operators, or other factors, forces must act with greater decisiveness. The time-critical nature of intelligence requires that they drastically improve the current 12 hour-to-2 days *turn time*. An intended benefit of the Joint Intelligence Center (JIC) was to model effective intelligence sharing so the example would replicate throughout the rest of the security structure. Optimally, intelligence is most useful when it enables entry into, and disruption of, the adversary's decision loop cycle, and manipulates responses in a predictable manner—thereby achieving information dominance. The information superiority now enjoyed is enhanced due to increased internal coordination and expanded U.S. intelligence sharing. A new level of success is expected once analysts and operators maximize the art of intelligence to *anticipate* and *act* on an adversary's actions rather than waiting for reports to be verified before acting.

4. Security Force Corruption

The final major factor impeding the transformation process is police and military corruption. A principal challenge for senior officials is to prevent their officers from becoming compromised through corruption or association with IAGs. Quite simply, corruption is the exchange of loyalty from legitimate to illegitimate. Regardless of degree, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and depose the other."¹¹³ Corrupt individuals devastate investments in intelligence gathering, equating to the assassinations of reliable informants and the enormous difficulty in replacing them. A *tip off* destroys surprise, which not only results to a loss of mission success, but the enemy is poised to capitalize on the information and ambush government forces.

¹¹³ *The Holy Bible*, Matthew 6:24a, (New King James (NKJ), Roadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville).

CNP corruption scandals continue to appear with regularity. The head of the Highway police was dismissed in December 2003, while only a month earlier National Police Chief Teodoro Campo himself was fired surrounding corruption charges. Among the largest setbacks to building mutual trust and confidence came in July 2003, when police sold back three tons of seized cocaine to the drugs traffickers along with DEA informant information, which resulted in the eventual murder of two of the three men. Instances such as this perpetuate the culture of distrust and prohibit cooperative efforts that require a foundation of trust. Military corruption appears far less frequently. In fact, the COLMIL is regarded as one of the least corrupt sectors of society, but occasionally it occurs. In July 2004, the New York Times reported Colombia's discharging of over 500 military personnel for poor performance or suspicions of corruption or human rights abuses, of which 67 were officers with suspected links to right-wing groups.¹¹⁴ Uribe is effectively raising the price for those inclined to abandon their loyalty to the state, but as long as it is prevalent, it alone can nullify intelligence and turn the element of surprise into a disastrous operation.

C. CONSOLIDATED CHANGE OUTLOOK

The prospects of long-term consolidation of existing reforms, and the forecast for necessary additional reforms to occur, are linked to attributes within both the military and civilian ranks. Progress within the military depends first on identifying progressive and competent leadership; and second on continued emphasis in professionalizing the force. Meanwhile three key factors effecting lasting change in the civilian realm rest first with the president's leadership, then legislative support (funding), and finally the continued support of the Colombian people. President Uribe's leadership style has propelled change, but must now broaden out the vision and responsibility in order for it to institutionalize among the policy leaders. Congress has thus far failed to take a leadership role, instead opting to follow constituent desires. Fortunately, Colombian support has

¹¹⁴ *New York Times*, "Colombia Purges Over 500 Troops," (New York, July 13, 2004), p. A.10.

provided Uribe with a mandate for change. As long as his support remains convincing, congress and the people will support transformational policies.

1. Likelihood of Continued Military Support for Transformation

Within the Ministry of Defense's own control, the element of leadership will determine the COLMIL's cultivation of lasting change or prevent change from becoming institutionalized. Fortunately, for Colombia, the fledgling IBRDF force had a solid cornerstone of leadership and capable BRIM and Special Forces, upon which to build its larger success.

It is intuitively obvious that the armed forces own leadership is among the most critical elements in the success or failure of continued transformation. General Mora's steady building-block approach, initiated by General Tapias and continued by General Ospina, has created a firm foundation for future generations. This reverses the prevalent trend throughout the 1990s, when the Armed Forces Commander position lacked the continuity necessary to correct fundamental military problems. Generals eased into the position in the twilight of their careers and retired in an average of just 15-months, while three of the eight generals retired in less than 9 months in office.¹¹⁵ Successors generally came into office without the benefit of program continuity. Attempting effective change in such a short period is difficult enough, but "wholesale housecleaning of incompetents" was required of this top position.¹¹⁶ General Tapias brought legitimacy and purpose to the top office, with a vision of improving force conduct and performance. His close working relationship with his two eventual successors, Mora and Ospina, infused much needed continuity. Mora held the top military office for five years, using that time to pioneer new concepts of force employment and organization.¹¹⁷ General Ospina succeeded Mora in November 2003, and is advancing Mora's tradition of change. All three men were former

¹¹⁵ Comando General de las Fuerzas Militares de Colombia, official website, (available from: <http://www.cgfm.mil.co/cgfm.nsf/index.html?OpenFrameSet>, accessed 12 September 2004)

¹¹⁶ David Passage, *United States and Colombia: Untying the Gordian Knot* (Strategic Studies Institute, March 2000, ISBN: 1-58487-019-2), p. 13.

¹¹⁷ Juan Forero, "Military Aide Quits, Jointing 3 Others in Colombia's Shake-Up," *New York Times* (New York, November 13, 2003), p. A.9.

BRIM commanders, and all shared extensive combat experience in the IV Division -- conflict epicenter and FARC stronghold.¹¹⁸

Appointing competent progressive leaders remains critical to maintaining long-term strategic direction of the armed forces; however cultural changes are occurring very slowly. A positive indication however, is the effect of Uribe's "Trabajar, trabajar, trabajar" (working, working, working) motto and example on the armed forces community. The entourage of senior military and police officers who accompany the president are becoming accustomed to traveling to front line conflict zones to receive the unfiltered realities and issues of the war. "This [intensified] work ethic has cascaded down to every rank in the Police and Military," observed Colonel Higgins (U.S. Army, retired). He continued by saying, "I saw a near instantaneous transformation on Uribe's inauguration day." ¹¹⁹ Senior officers are applying the principle of personal accountability and closer supervision among their ranks; impressing the importance of performance and signifying their personal interest. The bachilleres (high-school graduate conscripts) are being phased out. Recognizing that these combat-exempt soldiers are incompatible with the offensively minded IBRDF force, the military and police have reduced these forces by 19 and 25 percent, respectively, from July 2002 to January 2004.¹²⁰

Two additional components of Colombia's leadership role are less convincing, but warrant mention. First, U.S. senior officers have long encouraged the Colombians to develop a written strategy to articulate and guide the COLMIL's actions, followed by molding officers to adhere to it. General Mora published Colombia's first-ever national military strategy titled, "Strategic

¹¹⁸ Thomas Marks, "Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency," pp. 11-13.

¹¹⁹ Kevin Higgins, telephone Interview conducted by author on September 9, 2004, and subsequent email correspondence (COL (R), USA, currently serving as Colombian Antinarcotics Police Field Advisor, Narcotics Affairs Section, US Embassy Bogotá; formerly Military Group (MLGRP) Commander—Bogotá, Colombia (1999-2001)).

¹²⁰ Dra. Maria del Pilar Hurtado A., p. 17.

Direction 2003.” This document represents a hopeful sign for eventual developments, but does not have much intrinsic power to sustain transformation in its infancy.

The second under-developed component of military leadership is the COLMIL’s regional military to military cooperation efforts. Plan Patriota is a Colombia’s first large scale, on-going military offensive in traditional guerrilla strongholds that began in late 2003.¹²¹ In addition to greater U.S. assistance, its long-term success depends on the guerrillas being squeezed between COLMIL and neighboring state security forces, rather than simply allowing them to slip away. Hence, increased multi-lateral or bi-lateral cooperation is necessary, yet the effectiveness of such efforts remains uncertain.

2. Likelihood of Future Civilian Support for Transformation

Among the civilian sector three distinct groups could conceivably influence the continued progress. Presidential powers, and Uribe’s personality in particular, currently reflect the singularly most influential and hopeful indications for continued change. Second, the legislative branch retains appropriations authority, but is has failed to assume a larger leadership role. Finally, the general public exhibit enormous support for Uribe and by extension the improvements in the armed forces, but at an unfamiliar price.

Executive Branch Leadership. The best defense against truncating transformation lies with Uribe, and extending his leadership beyond 2006. Uribe enjoys universal esteem among policy makers, academics and professionals, as the single largest reason for success. Similarly, he has benefited from the transformation process among his general population as his approval ratings remain between 70-80 percent, although the ruling elite resist some of his governmental reform initiatives.^{122,123} Every additional year under his direction

¹²¹ The Center for International Policy–Colombia Program, *U.S. Military and Police Aid: 2004: The ‘Troop Cap’ Debate* (July 16, 2004, available from: <http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/04cap.htm>, accessed 12 September 2004).

¹²² Luis Alberto Moreno, “After A Dark Period, A Better Colombia,” *The Boston Globe* (Boston, August 19, 2004), p. 1.

¹²³ Juan Forero, “A 2nd Term? Colombian Deeply Split,” *The New York Times* (New York, April 26, 2004), p. A.4.

deepens the fledgling roots of change through his measure to increase the budget, demand rapid change, and reject old paradigm timetables.

However, what is the strongest indicator for success is also this author's most glaring critique. Despite all the positive effects of President Uribe, he will fail the citizens of Colombia if he leaves office without doing a lot less—and requiring others to do a lot more. In other words, key persons in every ministry and department must be mentored to carry on his vision of embracing change and despising the status quo; to challenge cultural norms and seek uncommon efficiencies. The current political movement to amend their Colombian Constitution to permit reelection of the president remains uncertain. Alternatively, another person(s) should be groomed for leadership who shares Uribe's character, vision and conviction. Unfortunately, such a person does not exist and therefore, the issue of presidential leadership remains uncertain. Expect his leadership style to remain the engine behind the military's transformational process. In the long run, his failure to proselytize and mentor other policy makers leaves Colombia's future leaders susceptible to the numerous officers bent on subverting transformation before it can emerge from infancy.

In contrast to the President Uribe, the Ministers of Defense have not shared a strong leadership role. Minister Marta Lucia Ramirez (August 2002 – November 2003) was selected for exceptional administrative abilities and appeal to U.S. policy makers rather than a consummate knowledge of military art. Uribe's public rebuke of her actions while siding instead with the Air Force general in April 2003, effectively hobbled the possibility of continued leadership authority. Her successor, Jorge Alberto Uribe Echavarría, also shares no military affairs experience, but is instead is a noted administrator.¹²⁴ In both cases, the purposeful selection of bureaucrats rather than visionary leaders nullifies hopes that this position can serve to assert "actual" authority over the military.

¹²⁴ Jane's World Armies Review (JWAR), *World Armies/Colombia/Command the Control*, [online] (posted August 17, 2004, available from: <http://www2.janes.com/K2/results.jsp>, accessed 19 September 2004).

His legacy includes these characteristics, but *as goes Uribe, so goes Colombia's war*, and by extension, military progress. Uribe has two years remaining in his term, but he is under constant danger of an IAG assassination.

Legislative Branch Support. Congressional leaders have failed to step up and address this issue. The president's enormous popularity remains the principal motivation for their current congressional support for defense programs. Hence, the outlook for long-term congressional commitment is poor.

Even if the presidential and congressional commitment is sustained, what impact will political corruption have on security force transformation? Corrupt officials may not only pressure for the appointment of *soft* or inept leaders within the military, but also obstruct operations or leak information used by military and police to gain intelligence and surprise advantages. It is necessary that *clean* officials capitalize on current advantages and drive the IAGs to complete capitulation or destruction—anything less only creates new problems for the next generation. Pressure must continue to increase, rather than remain constant, or IAGs will adapt to the current IBRDF battle rhythm, undermining military success and reemerge as a stronger force.

General Public Support. The third category of concern is Colombia's growing price tag associated with sustaining this expanded force in relation to their historically allocated funding. This point addresses Congress' willingness to appropriate funds as well as the COLMIL's wise stewardship and investment in needed procurement. Unlike textbook transformation of replacing a large legacy force with IBRDF structure, Colombia's situation requires that government troops occupy the land as well as transform, meaning that new mobile forces must be added on top of the existing force structure. The total Colombian Ministry of Defense budget, which includes the National Police, was US\$3.02 billion dollars, or 3.9 percent GDP (2003).¹²⁵ The COLMIL's unfunded requirements in 2004 totaled US\$720 million, including such essential transformations items as

¹²⁵ *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - South America*, "Colombian Defense Spending," (posted June 29, 2004, date posted: July 9, 2004, available from: <http://www2.janes.com/K2/results.jsp>, accessed 14 August 2004).

equipping citizens soldiers with arms and communication equipment, create new battalions and units to expand state presence, and fund the mobility assets so as to retain uninterrupted support; see figure 4.4. In addition to these shortfalls, a June 2003, U.S. General Accounting Office report estimated the cost of sustaining just the current aviation maintenance programs related to the *counterdrug* mission (helicopters and aerial eradication planes) were an estimated US\$230 million. The report concluded that Colombians are unable to assume additional CD funding responsibilities on top of existing counterterrorist commitments, thereby dashing any hopes of a decreasing United States role. U.S. assistance will continue for the foreseeable future; projected to be US\$731.00 and US\$720.92, in 2004 and 2005 respectively.¹²⁶⁻¹²⁷

Public opinion must support more than simply maintaining the current force however. As mentioned above, even Uribe's forecasted force size is insufficient to employ a persisting strategy. Significantly more mobile airlift is required, especially in light of maintenance reliability rates. To illustrate, the COLAR possesses thirteen Russian made Mi-17 helicopters, of which only three are operational on the day of this writing. Several of the others are *hard-broke*, meaning they must be shipped back to Russia for maintenance. The Army's UH-60's maintain an average readiness rate of less than 50 percent.¹²⁸ Despite Expanded Authority, a complex approval process of Plan Colombia assets for counterterrorism rather than CD missions limits their use by the COLMIL. In fact, ongoing CD efforts are effectively pulling the few unrestricted assets away from the counterterrorist fight.¹²⁹ Some estimates suggest as much as 400 helicopters total are needed, whereas current numbers remain well below 200,

¹²⁶ Center for International Policy-Colombia Program, *2004 Aid Request* (July 15, 2004, available from: <http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/04forops.htm>, accessed 21 August 2004), p. 7.

¹²⁷ Center for International Policy-Colombia Program, *U.S. Aid to Colombia Since 1997: Summary Tables*, (July 19, 2004, available from: <http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/05forops.htm>, accessed 21 August 2004), p. 2.

¹²⁸ Simeon Trombitas, telephone interview by author on September 13, 2004 (COL, USA, MLGRP Commander –Bogotá, Colombia).

¹²⁹ Ibid.

including the CNP, COLMIL, and counterdrug-only assets.¹³⁰ Additional fixed wing aircraft are also needed to deliver reinforcements to the conflict zone and sustain them during combat. The number of enormously expensive assets is a formidable obstacle for a nation that dedicated only 2 percent of their GDP toward the war only a few years ago, requiring a fundamental shift in values. If not for Uribe's commitment to funding the war effort, the recent military success will tend to lull policy makers into a false sense of security followed by the diversion of scarce resources to neglected social and economic issues in light of the long recession the country has endured.

Interestingly, Colombia and the United States have traveled this road together before. At the bequest of Colombian President Alberto Lleras Camargo, the United States team led by CIA officer Hans Tofte submitted a preliminary report in January 1960, naming the security forces inability to take effective action was due to a lack of information; remaining in garrison; ineffective intelligence organizations; and a publicly despised CNP. A subsequent report two years later led by Yarborough, cited a lack of collaboration among the DAS, CNP and military, and inadequate transportation and communication equipment. Presumably out of frustration resulting from a lack of capabilities, the COLMIL ruthlessly went about putting down insurgencies and bandit gangs alike over the next critical years. The government's retrenchment and propensity for excessive violence spawned the resurrection of insurgent tensions.¹³¹ The COLMIL effectively debilitated the FARC in 1968, but being unable to bring about final resolution, the group revitalized throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s.¹³²

To implement a cultural change that will embrace the concept of transformation beyond the next decade, President Uribe and pro-transformation MOD principals must make the most of brief window of opportunity. Success

¹³⁰ Gabriel Marcella, *United States and Colombia*, pp. 11-60.

¹³¹ Dennis M. Rempe, *The Past as Prologue*, pp. 10-32.

¹³² Nina M. Serafino, p. CRS-34.

relies upon the correct personalities being placed into key positions, education expanded to all of tomorrow's executives, and continued domination in the battlefield.

Unfunded Necessities -- 2004	
Item Category	Amount (million)
Equip Citizen Soldiers (communications, weapons & transportation)	US\$ 169
Plan Energetico Vial Battalions (5)	122
Air Force Armament, Maintenance and Flying Hour Program	122
Carabineros (5,000 – National Police Rapid Response Infantry)	80
Eastern Command's Mobile Battalion	66
Military Liaison Soldiers (2,000) to Work with Citizen Soldiers	40
Ready-Auxiliary Police Force (2,500)	27
Riverine Combat Elements (4)	22
Riverine Swift Boats	16
Renovation of Communication Equipment	14
Three Naval Counterguerrilla Companies (2-Carib; 1-Pacific)	13
Citizen Soldier Support Equipment (Navy)	10
Intelligence Operations	6
Miscellaneous	13
TOTAL	720

Figure 4.4 Colombian Unfunded Requests – 2004
(From Reference: Dra. Maria del Pilar Hurtado A.)

V. CONCLUSION

*To build may have to be the slow and laborious task of years. To destroy can be the thoughtless act of a single day.*¹³³

Sir Winston Leonard Spenser Churchill
(1874-1965)

*Look, we have the snake almost defeated. If we let go now and allow it time to breathe, the snake not only will survive but will grow again.*¹³⁴

President Alvaro Uribe
October 14, 2003

Faced with a growing national threat, a handful of Colombian leaders initiated efforts to reform the armed forces by leveraging superior intelligence to deploy forces rapidly. This concluding chapter summarizes the findings of the thesis in an effort to discern possible lessons for other developing nations with legacy forces that are incapable of addressing emerging threats. The first half of this chapter is comprised of three sections that initially summarize growing security threat concerns, then synopsise the key events and actors in Colombia's process of transformation, and finally asses Colombia's progress.

The second half of the chapter contains four segments. First, what lessons can we draw from Colombia's experience? Second, what are the obstacles faced by Colombia, which are common conditions in other developing nations. Third, what should the United State's policy be in assisting other developing nations make a successful transition?

A. RELEVANT THREAT

When the bi-polar world order collapsed in 1989, developing nations unexpectedly entered a new era of self-reliance; no longer able to count on its

¹³³ *QuoteWorld.org* (available from: <http://www quoteworld.org/author.php?thetext=Sir+Winston+Leonard+Spenser+Churchill+%281874-1965%29>, accessed 8 September 2004).

¹³⁴ Ricardo Galarza, "Colombia's Uribe Is a Man of Action;" *Insight on the News* (News World Communications, Inc., October 14, 2003, available from: <http://www.findarticles.com>, accessed 11 September 2004).

aligned superpower for strength. Many governments remained underdeveloped and incapable of exercising control over territorial boundaries. The largely stationary, legacy force structures that served them since WWII soon became ineffective against emerging threats of insurgencies, international and religious terrorism, WMD proliferations, and transnational crime. The IBRDF model emerged (under various names) with characteristics needed to defeat small, agile, sub-state enemies. Combining the concepts of information superiority and immediate direct action produced a new level of state lethality ideally suited for security threats such as that facing Colombia.

B. COLOMBIA'S EXPERIENCE

Colombia's policy makers serve at a critical juncture. A great opportunity is at hand to end a 40-plus year long chapter of internal violence and destruction. If leaders fail to advance through this juncture, they will have squandered the best opportunity available to them since the late 1960s to bring peace and stability to their citizens. This section summarizes how the circumstances and key actors brought Colombia to their current situation.

From the 1960s through much of the 1980s, the COLMIL and FARC organizations mirrored the other. Both sides fought against the other to an essential stalemate. Small innovations from time to time caused minor ebbs and flows, but neither managed to gain an advantage sufficient to defeat the other. In the mid-1980s throughout the 1990s, the FARC capitalized on enormous revenues from the narcotics industry. The cash flow allowed them to acquire modern weapons, state-of-the-art command and control communication equipment and the expansion of territorial influence. They developed a written strategy and numerically grew, expanding regional coverage from 15 fronts to over 65, but they retained the same hierarchical organizational structure.¹³⁵

The war approached crisis levels during President Samper's crippled administration (1994-1998), which was crippled by accusations of narcotics

¹³⁵ Thomas Marks, "Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency," pp. 7-8, 36.

corruption that led to an unsuccessful impeachment process. Meanwhile, CNP intensified their counterdrug efforts and were successful in breaking up the large cartels. Animosity and lack of cooperation between the CNP and COLMIL left the COLMIL ill prepared for the resulting decentralization of the drug trade, which led to increased insurgent involvement in the drug industry. The increased resources facilitated a FARC transition from guerrilla tactics to maneuver warfare. The result was military defeats in the field and CNP outpost annihilations, leading many observers to fear for the survival of the Colombian state.

Whereas the FARC had vastly expanded resources to gain an advantage, the COLMIL was forced to find other means. Almost immediately upon taking office in 1998, President Pastrana's hand-picked generals, Tapias and Mora, selected IBRDF concepts to counter the insurgent threat -- reorganizing and creating new highly mobile, rapidly deployment forces, acting on near-real time intelligence. Modest aid came from the United States in 1997 to 1999, and a flood of assistance with Plan Colombia, in 2000 to 2001, but it was legally obligated to the counterdrug mission and offered little to the counterinsurgency war. Despite resource limitations, the COLMIL battled back to parity within a year, completing Colombia's cycle of violence.

Several circumstances and initiatives combined by 2002, to create transformational change. The failed peace process had mobilized public opinion against the FARC, and in favor of presidential candidate Uribe's promise to take a hard-line stance against armed actors. Uribe rejected the military's existing paradigms for change and demanded increased performance. The ascension of General Mora and appointment of General Ospina complemented Uribe's progressive vision. New rapid deployment force operational dates were accelerated, while adding additional units for training. Despite congress' passive approval and lack of leadership, Uribe marshaled the necessary increased funding requirements through the introduction of tax reform legislation.

Not surprisingly, much of the strongest resistance to the IBRDF concept exists within the CNP and military forces themselves. The dominant parochial culture and inter-service distrust has inhibited greater progress on joint operations. Evidence of joint ops is lacking at all levels except the Joint General Staff, where it is heavily emphasized, and at the austere municipal levels, where CNP and military must rely upon each other. The future of Colombia's transformation depends on the tendencies of those selected for key positions in the near future.

C. ASSESSMENT OF CHANGE

It is extremely rare to witness an event such as that presently occurring in Colombia. Nations are generally staunchly opposed to challenging their own military culture except in time of recognized defeat or extreme crisis. The gradual intensification of the FARC threat did not shock most Colombians into perceiving the war as either a defeat or severe. Yet, transformation has occurred to the past two years thanks to the vision and support of only a handful of leaders.

The operational results and civilian security reports presented in chapter IV reflect dramatic improvements that cannot be explained by simply adapting to the FARC threat, or throwing money and resources at the problem. As described above, the counterdrug assets have not yet been effectively employed against Colombia's terrorist threat.

Despite the good news, four key shortcomings remain in their journey toward an IBRDF structure. By no coincidence, all four factors relate to the psychological resistance to change, and not a lack of ability. Presumably, this opposition comes in response to a lack of consensus that transformational change was required. One may conceivably reason, had the crisis escalated to a greater extent, resistance to change would now be proportionally less.

The adherence to parochial procedures, the force division on IBRDF concepts, the failure to operationalize and share intelligence, and the impact of

corruption on building an effective IBRDF team are not unique to Colombia. To varying degrees, every military force deals with these issues. Overcoming these obstacles in the future will require strong leadership from within the armed forces, and from the civilian sector.

D. COLOMBIA LESSONS LEARNED

The intended value of this project goes beyond simply gaining a better understanding of Colombia's situation. This section draws out essential lessons from this one experience that may be transferable for other nations about to embark on a transformation journey of their own. First, leadership played a cardinal role in propelling change in both the civilian and military sectors. Next, the existing capabilities of the COLMIL favorably impacted change as well. Finally, contrary to conventional wisdom, foreign aid played a secondary role to those above.

1. Civilian Leadership

Colombian forces began true transformation once Uribe assumed office. Characterized as both tough and charismatic, he immediately rejected the gradual adaptation measures his generals were advocating and demanded results. Concepts of intelligence fusion, mobility, and the like, fit his vision for change. His forceful direction provided both the thrust and vector to force military change. Contributing variables also included winning an election by an unprecedented margin, affording him a democratic mandate. He unquestionably remains the central figure in the transformation movement. However, his cabinet members, and the offices they represent, were found to be irrelevant as a force for change. Similarly, congress was also irrelevant in this case study. They remain predicatively disinterested in overseeing military matters, yet they generally acquiesced to the increased funding proposals set forth by Uribe.

To gain an appreciation for the difficult task facing Colombia, in 1986, the U.S. Congress legislated law to break parochial traditions within the U.S. military, and the today, the current administration is advancing transformation further. What was mandated for the U.S. military through Goldwater-Nichols Act, the

Colombians military is attempting to electively accomplish; arguably much more difficult. Fortunately, strong leadership is not unique to Colombia. Once introduced to the possibilities for improvement, these leaders may also act as the engine for change. Their role is elevated when combined with a disinterested congress and a compliant military. What matters more than a totalitarian or democratic form of government is the formal and informal power the person in office yields. A head of a democratic state may gain by enjoying overwhelming support, but can just as easily be crippled by discontented constituents. Conversely, a totalitarian leader's enjoys a consolidation of power, and will be less affected by minor fluctuations in public opinion.

2. Core Competencies

With the experience of four decades of counterinsurgency fighting, the 20,000 elite Mobile Brigades and Counterguerrilla Battalions competency made Colombia's transformation effort easier. To clarify, these forces did not make transformation occur, but they made the transformation that did occur much more effective. The larger conscript force lacked necessary training and abilities, and were therefore determined irrelevant to change.

Other nations are unlikely to share the advantage of a disciplined force with 40 years experience fighting the same enemy. These capability deficiencies will require three additional ingredients: education, training and time. The amount of each is relative to the specific situation; what is the existing delta between the nation's starting point and the desired capability? Regardless of degree, both officers and enlisted must follow a progression from an introduction phase through the employment phase of the new capabilities and concepts. This takes us to the third lesson.

3. Military Leadership

Distinctly separate from a military's core competency, lies the impact of military leadership on transformation. While Colombia's top commanders did not create the vision for fundamental change, they were progressive, competent and obedient to civilian rule under Uribe. Even during the mass resignations during the Pastrana peace process, there was not threat of the military circumventing

civil authority--resignations were rejected and they returned to work. The ideal case would exist if the head of state and competent military leaders shared a vision for transformation. The next best case, as occurred in Colombia, progressive and competent generals are obedient to the head of state's vision for change. Submission to authority compensates for the lack of initiative for change.

Moving from good to worse situations, eventually nations are faced with military leaders who are incompetent and defiant, or competent yet defiant. In either case the head of state must remove replaced these generals until the right leader(s) are in place to cultivate the desired transformation. A cautionary note is warranted where cases of competent-yet-defiant generals exist. The added level of difficulty comes in managing the conflicting loyalties between the state and the out-going general, thereby adding to the risk of military revolt. Another negative situation includes nations whose military's are comprised of disparate factions under the influence and control of warlords rather than a consolidated military loyal to the state. Such nations add further to the challenges of transformation.

4. Foreign Aid

The U.S. has played an supporting role in Colombia's experience. The vast amounts of U.S. aid were not critical to transformation itself, contrary to conventional wisdom. The United States' counterdrug aid, such as Plan Colombia's US\$1.3 billion, is errantly credited for Colombia's transformation success, when in fact the effects on transformation were secondary at best, and counterproductive at worst. Contributions most applicable to transformation included military education and training initiatives that demonstrate the efficiencies of IBRDF concepts, and the advantages of joint operations. The types of training are diverse in form and function. Examples span from purely academic, such as that found in U.S. war colleges and noncommissioned officer academies, to certification in UN Peacekeeping skills, to special forces unconventional tactics. Accomplished in both the United States and Colombia, the interaction allowed COLMIL officers to personalize the IBRDF concepts to fit their threat situation and U.S. officers the opportunity to provide objectivity and

suggested improvements. From 1999 through 2003, the U.S. military has provided training to over 29,440 Colombian military members (see Figure 5.1 for annual breakdown). The Department of State and Justice have similar initiatives that have engaged the CNP and separate ministries to advance the joint and interagency interaction. The moral and psychological support also provided an intangible-but-beneficial means of urging transformation. Transformation has occurred despite the fact that the high dollar assets remain restricted from use, as in the case of helicopters, or the COLMIL has not yet leveraged their true potential, as in the case of high-tech intelligence assets. Colombia would clearly benefit from greater access to helicopter, as they will see improvement as intelligence is operationalized more effectively, but at present, their absence has not prevented the transformation process.

The Colombian case illustrates that the most essential element in supporting military transformation lies in providing quality education and training more so than expensive machinery and technology. Those elements may enhance the process and make the force more lethal, but in the initial stages, the critical element requires relatively much less investment.

U.S. Military Training Provided to Colombia					
1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
2,476	>1,241	6,300	6,477	12,947	>29,441

Figure 5.1 U.S. Military Training to Colombia; 1999-2003
(From Reference: Center for International Policy--Colombia Program,
Foreign Military Training Report).

E. COMMON OBSTACLES TO TRANSFORMATION

Despite the best efforts of many intelligent professionals, the environment and circumstances can undermine progress. This section demonstrates the impact of two fundamental obstacles in Colombia's transformation efforts that are also relevant to other traditional militaries in the developing world. First, corruption is capable of nullifying critical intelligence and destroying trust. The second obstacle arises when both military and police are focused on overlapping internal threats, and the complex relationships that exist.

1. Corruption

Colombian officials are engaged on a second front against corruption. The IBRDF foundation relies on uncorrupted intelligence to launch surprise strikes against the enemy and manipulate the information received by the enemy in order to force desired responses. Whether achieved by high-tech, low-tech methods or both, the building of intelligence cases require enormous effort. One corrupt individual can destroy thousands of hours of work, and effect the execution of government informants. The forfeiture of surprise leads to the target's absence or may result in an unexpected ambush.

Second, corruption is counterproductive to efforts towards jointness. President Uribe's attempts to bridge the staunch CNP-COLMIL rivalry has proven an arduous journey. Occurrences of corruption especially among the CNP as well as the potential for ambush, forces are afforded valid reasons not to cooperate outside their own service, much less interagency wide.

This remains a fundamental obstacle for the COLMIL, as with many other nations. While corruption is vulnerable to defeat, lessons on how to effectively combat it will have to be found elsewhere.

2. Internal Cooperation

Utilizing Colombia's military forces against internal enemies adds an additional layer of difficulty to mere inter-service cooperation. For decades the solution was found in assigning counterdrug missions to the CNP and counterterrorism missions to the armed services, but ultimately both arms of the MOD failed to achieve their purpose; narcotics industry boomed and the FARC and AUC followed suit. While the enemy was exhibiting through efforts resembling jointness, government forces remained divided and on its heels. Besides the periodic Joint General Staff level planned operations, Colombia's lack of progress disappoints as a solution to overcome this obstacle.

The phenomenon of *internal-only threats* is common today, and with it comes new challenges regarding joint operations with the police, and differentiating between military and law enforcement functions. In nations that

organize their police and military under separate agencies, the issues of interagency may be extenuated to an even larger degree.

F. U.S. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

U.S. officials are not inclined to support many Plan Colombia-sized efforts. Fortunately, the lessons from Colombia support the argument that the IBRDF transformation process relies less on large outlays of money, and more education and training to model the concept. Two adjustments in U.S. policy are recommended in the case of Colombia, while broad guidance is suggested in assisting other nations in such an effort.

1. Policy with Regard to Colombia

In keeping with the spirit of transformation, policy recommendations with regard to Colombia resist typical *financial solutions*. Rather, existing assets should be employed with greater efficiencies, and education and training efforts should be broadened. The United States regards Colombia as an ally in both the War on Drugs and the War on Terror, yet policies continue to restrict support to their counterterrorism war, notably the helicopter assets. Geographically, helicopter assets are crucial to the COLMIL's rapid mobility. The nation's high mountain and dense jungle terrain, and the FARC's exploitation of austere mobility corridors, nullify traditional means of transportation. Even with Expanded Authority, U.S. helicopters are effectively made unavailable for use in time-sensitive counterterrorist operations due to a lagging approval process. As the professed model of transformation, it is fair to expect the U.S. approval process would support the reaction time expected of the Colombians. Helicopter assets will remain under utilized until authorization can be obtained: 1) consistently; and 2) within one hour of notification. Colombians can perform the former by knowing what key factors will qualify or disqualify a mission. Ironically, the latter requires U.S. interagency cooperation to resolve.

The transformation toward IBRDF operations will deepen in proportion to its disciples. U.S. educational and training efforts have had a positive effect on those military members exposed to its virtues, but effects can be deepened by

proselytizing to a broader audience. Colombia's professional civil servants in Ministry of Defense positions present a good investment since they will remain regardless of election results. As the reporting authority for both the COLMIL and CNP branches, the Ministry of Defense office is intuitively appropriate to not only receive expanded training, but also instruct the message and develop their own measures of effectiveness to evaluate progress.

2. Policy with Regard to Other Nations

Based on what is known about force transformation, the first policy recommendation is to issue a warning to policy makers that military transformation is a very difficult, long-term process, with an uncertain outcome. If still undeterred, the Colombia model clearly indicates that the single, most critical factor for success was the presence of a strong, visionary leader.

Such reconstruction efforts should only be attempted when the current head of state has demonstrated an ability to lead, and retains sufficient consolidated power to direct change where necessary. Foundationally, the desire and vision for change must be *owned* by the leader(s); U.S. invoked change is not likely to convert to lasting change. The governmental type should not automatically qualify or disqualify a nation. Totalitarian governments may benefit from the consolidation of power but in democratic Colombia, Uribe was able to leverage popular support sufficient to gain congress' deference despite constitutional barriers to consolidated power.

Since military leadership can greatly enhance reconstruction efforts, military-to-military interaction should stress active submission to civilian authority, meaning proactively operationalizing the head of state's vision. Faced with a military establishment opposed to change, attempts should be made to identify progressive leaders where progress can be initiated, and from there expanded.

Forces already possessing core competencies greatly accelerate the conversion process. In such cases, it is necessary that only our most experienced personnel are providing instruction, thereby preserving the integrity of the IBRDF potential, and ultimately transformation success. In cases where

competency is found lacking, the process will be significantly prolonged as basic building block skills are taught first. In time critical situations where required competencies are missing, policy makers should consider greater reliance on regional security options, thereby leveraging neighboring competencies to fill a short-term void while skills are being acquired.

Among the most beneficial methods of assisting a developing nation refashion their military into IBRDF is through a tailored blending of education and training. In addition to the venues mentioned above, the United States has a long history of providing Planning Assistance Teams (PAT) or Military Training Teams (MTT) in country. These members can provide general skills or highly specialized training intended for the service counterpart or Special Forces. The emphasis and complexion of the tailored package should be tied directly to the force's competency and specific threat.

G. CONCLUSION

In January 2002, Thomas Marks published a paper accurately entitled, "Colombians Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency."¹³⁶ Since mid-2002, adaptation has become transformation by the enormity and breadth of change, led by President Uribe. By daring to confront foundational concepts governing capabilities, people and organization, change was possible. Colombia represents an interesting case for a couple reasons. First, nations seldom make core-level strategic corrections without first suffering a convincing defeat. Colombians, and the COLMIL in particular, was under no such impression, yet many of its officers and leaders now embrace continued transformational efforts after experiencing it for only two years. Second, history offers few examples of a developing nation enduring such change. Such ambitions are usually reserved for wealthier nations and collective security regimes. Yet, it remains uncertain what authors will title their Colombian articles in years 2006, 2010, and beyond.

Admittedly, Colombia's national threats go beyond a military nature. It is therefore appropriate that the solution be addressed in broader, grand strategy

¹³⁶ Thomas Marks, "Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency."

measure that address the social, judicial, economic, political and security woes. Colombian and U.S. policy makers do view the IBRDF conversion not as a panacea but one aspect in a comprehensive strategy. With regard to this singular issue, the findings herein conclude: initiation of Colombia's IBRDF transformation depended on the vision and actions of a few. After only two years of nurturing, its continued existence remains critically dependant on a few. Change will become lasting only when the few become *many*; when culture rejects parochialism and embraces joint/interagency operations. Any conclusion other than this is either naïve or pure conjecture, or a combination of both.

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APPENDIX



SOUTH AMERICA

Figure A.1 South America Map
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COLOMBIA

Figure A.2 Colombia Map
(After Reference: Central Intelligence Agency)

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